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Mrs Juliet Walling
Headteacher
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School
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Lancashire
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Dear Mrs Walling

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 April 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stage 2
- revise the school improvement plan so that it is more helpful to school leaders in securing the necessary improvements
- reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the two deputy headteachers and the subject leader for science. I also spoke with two representatives of the local authority to discuss the impact of the external support that the school has received since the previous inspection. I scrutinised the school improvement plan and the

school's self-evaluation document. I also looked at information related to pupils' attendance. I visited each classroom, with you, to observe teaching and learning. I spoke with pupils and looked at their work in books. I met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I scrutinised the school's procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work at the school and records of these checks on the single central record.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the school's governing body. Over half of the members of the current governing body are newly appointed, including the chair, who took up his role in September 2017.

Main findings

At the previous inspection, school leaders and governors were asked to address two key areas. The first area for development was to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by: raising teachers' expectations; ensuring that work is set at the correct level; and extending opportunities across all subjects for pupils to acquire skills in depth.

Some improvements have been secured in this area. The teaching of mathematics has improved across the school. There are strengths, across all curriculum areas, in early years and key stage 1. Pupils in Year 6 are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, weaknesses in other year groups in key stage 2 have not been addressed successfully by school leaders. Teaching in these year groups often lacks challenge and teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving remain too low. This was evident in the quality of written work seen during this inspection, which showed limited progress and was often poorly presented.

The second area the school was asked to improve was the quality of leadership and management by: ensuring that leaders and managers, including governors, hold teachers to account for pupils' progress; and strengthening the monitoring of teaching to ensure that teachers are meeting the agreed expectations.

The actions that leaders have taken to address this area have not had the required impact. This is because the checks leaders make on the quality of teaching are not sufficiently robust. Where teachers' expectations are too low, and they fail to provide challenging work for pupils, leaders have been too slow to intervene and secure improvements. The lack of progress in this area has not been recognised by senior leaders or governors. This is partly because the school's improvement plan lacks clarity and precision. Consequently, it does not help school leaders, including governors, to monitor the progress made in securing the necessary improvements. As a result, at this point in time, the school is not progressing with sufficient pace to ensure that it is at least good at its next inspection.

During this inspection, I also looked at pupils' attendance, which has been below the national average for the past two years. You are now taking stronger action when parents and carers regularly fail to send their children to school. Attendance has improved this year and is currently just below the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school remains too high. You recognise that further work is required with families of the small group of pupils who account for a significant proportion of absence.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's context and are confident in some aspects of their work. For example, they have a good understanding of the school's financial position. However, over time, governors have not provided the robust challenge needed to improve leadership and teaching. The recently appointed chair of the governing body recognises the challenges facing the school and has a good understanding of what needs to be done to strengthen governance.

External support

The school has drawn on a wide range of external support, provided by and through the local authority. Consultants have worked alongside teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A national leader of education worked with school leaders during the autumn term, and helped to develop and improve the systems used for monitoring pupils' progress. The local authority is closely monitoring the school's progress and the impact of the external support provided.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Lancaster, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector