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Mrs Maureen Cairns
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Dear Mrs Cairns

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Our Lady and St Brendan's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 May 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 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:

- continue to improve the teaching and learning and progress of pupils in mathematics, especially at the end of key stage 2
- ensure that teachers consistently provide appropriate levels of challenge for the most able pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the head of school and other senior leaders, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Leeds, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. School documentation, including

the school self-evaluation document, improvement plans and other relevant documents were scrutinised. I conducted short visits to several lessons with yourself. A sample of pupils' work was scrutinised with senior leaders. I also met with a group of pupils to evaluate their views on developments since the last inspection.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in the leadership of the school. At the time of the last inspection, there were two middle leaders with an overview of English and mathematics across the school. One of those middle leaders secured a promotion at another school, and the other has been promoted to the position of assistant headteacher in the school, with an overview of mathematics. You appointed an experienced member of staff to lead science across the school and another member of staff, who is a specialist leader of education (SLE), to have an overview of behaviour. Through the Catholic Schools Partnership, another SLE has been appointed to work across two schools, with an overview for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Governors are currently in the process of recruiting two middle leaders for September 2018 and a permanent headteacher for January 2018.

Main findings

Just before the last inspection, in March 2017, the local authority and the Diocese of Leeds brokered your appointment as interim executive headteacher. You acted swiftly and reviewed all areas of the school, correctly identifying and prioritising areas for improvement. You are relentless in your drive for continuous improvement. Together with the head of school, you have managed staffing changes effectively and have appointed experienced staff in some key areas of responsibility, including the behaviour, science and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, leadership and management have improved. Leaders and governors have taken a range of appropriate actions to address the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. Your improvement plans are detailed, focused and evaluated accurately against criteria for success. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning, and outcomes for pupils are improving.

During our joint visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work, we were able to confirm that, where learning is effective, the expectations are high and the quality of the questioning by the teachers supports pupils to accelerate their learning. However, we agreed that there is variation in the level of challenge for the most able pupils, across subjects and teachers, especially in mathematics. You have correctly identified the need for further improvement in embedding, consistently, the good practice seen in some lessons and pupils' books.

Since your appointment, you have acted quickly to raise the profile of the most able and the disadvantaged pupils across the whole school. You have revised the target setting procedures and raised expectations. You have empowered staff to take

ownership of the progress of these groups of pupils. Staff are able to provide appropriate support to those who need it. As a result, the differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are diminishing, in a number of year groups, in reading, writing and mathematics. Current school assessment information and inspection evidence indicate strong improvement in outcomes in reading and writing compared to last year, including the proportion of pupils who achieve the standards at greater depth. Although there is some improvement in mathematics, you acknowledged that there is more work to do here to improve further the teaching, learning and outcomes of pupils in this subject.

You have established a carefully planned cycle of checking the quality of teaching and learning in the school, through frequent visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. You have skilfully linked the school's progress tracking systems to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. You have ensured that staff receive appropriate training on various teaching and learning initiatives. Staff work collaboratively on developing further the engagement of pupils and the effectiveness of questioning. You have increased the accountability of staff for the progress of the pupils and children in their class, including the disadvantaged and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, teaching and learning are improving, and staff are becoming more creative in their planning of learning activities.

Since your appointment, you have revised the school's behaviour policy. You have appointed an experienced member of staff, who is also an SLE, to lead this area. Staff have worked together on strategies, such as 'learning time lost', to promote concentration, secure engagement and reduce distractions. You have introduced incentives such as the 'quality learners' cup' and house points to encourage positive behaviour. The leader of this area frequently checks that staff consistently apply the new initiatives and uphold the revised behaviour standards. As a result, the behaviour of pupils around the site and in the majority of lessons has improved. You agreed with me that, when learning activities do not meet the needs of all the pupils, some low-level disruption occurs.

Since the last inspection and as a result of the raised expectations, fixed-term exclusions have increased. Leaders use a range of support mechanisms to help pupils improve their behaviour and, as a result, school information indicates that behaviour incidents are reducing. You have introduced nurture groups at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 to support pupils who struggle to meet the new behaviour expectations. Pupils who receive this support quickly develop their confidence and resilience, and this has a positive impact not only on their behaviour but also on their progress and achievement.

External support

The external support provided to the school has come from the local authority, the Diocese of Leeds, and the Catholic School Partnership Teaching Schools Alliance. The local authority and the Diocese of Leeds work effectively together and have

been instrumental in brokering key leadership positions in the school. Both the local authority school improvement adviser and the Diocese of Leeds adviser know the school well and have regular reviews with you to support your school's continuous improvement. They jointly provide professional development opportunities and training for leaders in the school and newly appointed governors. As a result, leaders at all levels are becoming more confident. Through the Catholic School Partnership Teaching Schools Alliance, you have access to a number of specialist leaders of education. These specialist teachers provide advice and support for different aspects of school performance, including your recently appointed leader with an overview for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Consequently, action plans are focused and accurately evaluated. You have ensured that leaders, at all levels in your school, are more outward facing and they regularly attend network meetings facilitated by the local authority and the Diocese of Leeds.

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

Yours sincerely

Dimitris Spiliotis

Her Majesty's Inspector