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Mrs Bernadette Nesbit
St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Nesbit

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 July 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 recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- improve further the proportion of pupils, including the disadvantaged pupils, who achieve the expected standards in reading and writing, at the end of key stage 1.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, your assistant headteacher and other middle leaders. I also met with members of the governing body (including the chair of governors), two representatives of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Hallam. Together, we discussed the support and actions taken since the last inspection. School documentation, including the school self-evaluation document, improvement plans, and other relevant documents were evaluated. I conducted short visits to several lessons with the senior leader responsible for

teaching and learning. A sample of pupils' work was jointly reviewed with middle and senior leaders. I also met with a group of pupils from Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 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. In 2016, the substantive headteacher retired and the Diocese of Hallam brokered the appointment of an interim executive headteacher, who is also a national leader of education. This appointment became permanent in 2017. A new chair of governors was also appointed in 2016. The substantive deputy headteacher and six staff left during 2017. A new assistant headteacher with responsibility for teaching and learning was appointed in January 2018. A special educational needs coordinator and a business manager were appointed in 2017. A new school manager, who will act as head of school, has been appointed for September 2018. Governors are currently in the process of recruiting a leader for the early years provision.

Main findings

Since the last inspection and your appointment as executive headteacher, you have acted swiftly and reviewed all areas of the school, correctly identifying and prioritising areas for improvement. You have been a catalyst for rapid developments in the school and you are passionate and relentless in your drive for continuous improvement. During a turbulent period in staffing, you and your new chair of governors managed changes effectively to eradicate weak teaching. Governors appointed experienced staff in some key areas of responsibility, including the overview of teaching and learning. As a result, leadership and management have improved and there is strong capacity for further improvement. 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.

Since the last inspection, you have appointed a knowledgeable assistant headteacher to oversee the quality of teaching and learning. Together, you reviewed relevant policies and established a new whole-school approach to planning learning activities for children and pupils. During the joint visits to lessons with your senior leader responsible for teaching and learning, and scrutiny of pupils' work, we were able to confirm that teachers' expectations are high. In addition, the quality of the questioning by the teachers supports pupils to accelerate their learning, check their understanding and encourage independent thinking and resilience. Teachers plan learning activities to match the needs of all pupils, including the disadvantaged and the most able pupils. Teachers know well the pupils in their classes, and use individual progress information effectively to provide appropriate challenge.

Following your appointment, you reviewed a number of school policies. You raised aspirations across the whole school. Inspection evidence and scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that pupils make strong progress from their starting points. Consequently, in the vast majority of classes, and where staffing has been stable, teachers follow the school's revised policies, progress is more marked and pupils take pride in their books.

Leaders have ensured that staff receive appropriate professional development in the teaching of writing. You introduced a range of initiatives around writing which are becoming embedded. The recently appointed member of staff who is leading literacy provides effective support to teachers. She is sharply focused on improving standards in writing through frequent monitoring of the impact of these initiatives. Together, you continuously review the writing curriculum. Pupils have a range of opportunities, including the 'deep in the moment' tasks, to write more extensively in a range of subjects, including science, religious education and through topic subjects. As a result, outcomes for pupils in writing are improving.

Following the findings from the last inspection, you and governors commissioned external reviews of the school's use of pupil premium funding and governance. School leaders and the new chair of governors acted swiftly and have already implemented a range of strategies. Governors are continuously developing their knowledge and skills further. They are now more able and confident to provide better challenge and support to leaders. Governors visit the school regularly and are involved in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the improved development plans. They frequently visit lessons with leaders and take part in the scrutiny of pupils' work. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They ensure that the additional pupil premium funding is spent effectively. As a result, the profile of disadvantaged pupils in the school has been raised and outcomes of disadvantaged pupils are improving.

Since the last inspection, and your appointment, you have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that there is a culture of safeguarding in the school. Your knowledgeable business manager ensures that all appropriate checks are in place and records are detailed and thorough. Your safeguarding team knows the pupils well and frequently discusses any concerns. As a result, referrals to external agencies are swift and staff work closely with a range of agencies to support vulnerable pupils by providing timely and appropriate information.

Detailed and thorough systems are in place for tracking and monitoring the progress of children and pupils in the school. Leaders have linked the quality of teaching and learning with the outcomes of pupils. You have increased the accountability of staff and raised expectations. Staff meet regularly to discuss pupils' progress and put effective support in place for pupils who need it. Assessment systems are checked with other schools, and leaders are confident about the accuracy of their assessment. As a result, inspection evidence, scrutiny of pupils'

work and provisional assessment information indicate a significant improvement in the outcomes of pupils. These include the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils, at the end of Year 6, in reading, writing and mathematics. Differences in attainment between groups of pupils are diminishing. During the current academic year, the school has seen an improvement in the proportion of children achieving good levels of development at the end of early years, including for disadvantaged children. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 has remained broadly in line with last year and still below national averages. You agreed with me that this is an area that needs more work.

External support

The external support provided to the school has come from the local authority and the Diocese of Hallam. The local authority and the Diocese of Hallam 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 Hallam adviser know the school well and have regular reviews with you to support your school's continuous improvement. They jointly provide challenge and professional development opportunities as well as training for leaders in the school and newly appointed governors. Consequently, action plans are focused and accurately evaluated. You have access to a number of specialist leaders of education. These specialist teachers provide advice and support for different aspects of school performance. As a result, staff at all levels, including middle leaders, are becoming more confident in developing their skills further.

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

Yours sincerely

Dimitris Spiliotis

Her Majesty's Inspector