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Ms Fiona Parker
Head of School
St William's Catholic Primary School
Young Street
Bradford
West Yorkshire
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Dear Ms Parker

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

Following my visit to your school on 18 September 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 received a judgement of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspection.

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:

- eradicate any remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching so that pupils make brisker and more assured progress and attain well
- extend and deepen the school's relationship with parents and carers so that there is a school- and community-wide understanding of, and commitment to, the links between strong attendance and pupils' success and well-being so that attendance, especially that of disadvantaged pupils, continues to improve
- ensure that the school-wide focus on the teaching of reading continues to develop and expand pupils' love of, and skills with, reading and that clear and

explicit links continue to be made between reading, writing and speaking

- ensure that the Reception provision is further developed so that children experience a wider range of carefully planned and varied activities that stretch, excite and stimulate them.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and with the consultant headteacher supporting the school. I met with members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair, a representative of the local authority and of the Catholic Diocese of Leeds to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also visited all classes and spoke with pupils about their experience of school. You joined me for almost all of these visits. I spoke informally with groups of parents at the start and end of the day. I also discussed reading with a group of Year 1 pupils and listened to them read. I met with the full staff, three recently qualified teachers and with three subject leaders. I also evaluated the school plans and monitoring processes.

The inspection was shadowed by Barry Found, Her Majesty's Inspector.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been very substantial changes to staffing at the school. A significant number of staff have left, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher. A consultant headteacher has been supporting the school since July 2018 and is in school four days a week. You took up your role as head of school at the start of September 2018.

Main findings

In the very short time that you have been in post, you have led the school with vision, energy and determination. You have swiftly and effectively addressed a series of challenging staffing issues. You have planned for improvement carefully and put in place rigorous systems that are set to eradicate the historical inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. You are driven by a strong sense of moral purpose and an absolute conviction that your pupils, and the community from which they come, deserve, and must have, the best. This positive and firmly held view is shared, because of your openness and commitment, by staff across the school. It has also been welcomed by pupils and, increasingly, parents. Morale among the staff is now high. They feel involved and ready to play their part in the next steps for the school.

For a range of reasons, governors were slow to respond fully to the recommendations of the review of governance undertaken after the last inspection. However, governors know the school and the community it serves well and are now more vigorously developing their skills. They are now more alert to the school's

strengths and are developing a more detailed awareness of areas that need to be addressed. They are keen to improve and are well placed to support you as you seek to improve the school. You provide governors with detailed information about the school. You are developing a range of strategies to help ensure that governors are not overly reliant on this information, but can draw on more direct experience of the school at work to inform their judgements of how well things are going. As a result, even at this early stage of your leadership, you are enabling them to hold you and your team more effectively to account.

Teaching at the school is still too variable. However, you have put in place rigorous systems to check its quality and you have linked them to the systematic management of the performance of all staff, both teachers and teaching assistants. You and the consultant headteacher visit classrooms regularly and you use your observations to develop good practice and stimulate school-wide improvements in teaching. Staff welcome this because they feel involved and part of the process of improving the school. I saw examples of pupils engaged and delighted by their work on the book 'The red prince'. I also saw, however, pupils stoically engaging in repetitive number tasks in mathematics that did not stretch and move them on. There was further evidence of this lack of pace in learning in the mathematics books that I scrutinised.

The provision for the youngest children at the school needs to be improved. Children do not have enough opportunities to develop their language skills through a rich, mixed diet of child-led and adult-led activities. Also, it is unclear how staff, including teaching assistants, use what they record about the progress and needs of individual children to inform planning for the child's next steps in learning and development. The learning environment, especially outside, is not yet fully accessible to children and is in need of attention so that children can move freely and make choices, appropriately supported by adults, about what they do to develop their language and other skills.

You have identified reading as an important area that needs further whole-school development. The school is well placed to move forward quickly on this. There is a range of attractive spaces and small libraries around the school where books are readily available. Pupils told me that they had already noticed an increased focus on reading. They said they welcomed this. However, the teaching of phonics is variable in its effect. More needs to be done to establish and share good practice among all staff so that there is a consistent and focused approach to the teaching and encouragement of reading.

Although now closer to national averages, pupils' absence, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils, is still too high. You have, rightly, made this a priority and have put yourself at the heart of actions to improve attendance. You have put in place rigorous and increasingly effective systems to monitor attendance. You have also put in place dedicated staff to engage with the families of pupils who, for a range of reasons, find regular attendance challenging. Above all, you have raised

the profile of the importance of regular attendance and promptness to school among the pupils and their parents. Pupils I spoke with were clear about the importance of attendance, not only for their learning but also their safety and well-being. This is because you and your staff talk with pupils regularly about it. More needs to be done, however, particularly with parents, to improve attendance across the school.

You have put in place careful and detailed plans to help ensure that the school identifies the main priorities for improvement. These plans have appropriate timescales and set out the responsible members of staff. However, they would be even more focused if you identified more precisely who was undertaking tasks, who was ensuring these tasks were completed and then who was assessing their effect on pupils' learning and well-being.

External support

The Catholic Diocese of Leeds and Bradford local authority are both providing effective support to the school. Officers of the authority and the diocese, working with the governing body, have played a significant role in brokering and supporting the current leadership arrangements. The school has also received effective support in improving the quality of teaching from local Catholic schools. This support has taken a range of forms. These include reciprocal visits by staff, subject-specific training and assuring the accuracy of the school's judgements about pupils' progress and attainment through shared assessment sessions with other local schools. In your desire to ensure sustained and continuing improvement, you and the governing body have sought support and training from a wide range of sources. You, rightly, see this partnership working as a vital aspect of the continuing improvement of the school into the future.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Catholic 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

Mark Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector