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Ms Karen Dobson
Headteacher
Holy Rood Catholic Primary School
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Dear Ms Dobson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Rood Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 September 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional language by carrying out more careful analysis of attendance information and the impact of strategies to promote good attendance
- ensure that pupils in key stage 2 make more rapid progress, particularly disadvantaged pupils and in writing
- ensure that the newly formed senior leadership team immediately play an active and effective role in school improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the two assistant headteachers and staff responsible for monitoring attendance. I also met with governors, including the chair and vice chair, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I spent time with you considering learning in lessons and work in pupils' books. I met a group of pupils and also spoke to pupils, where appropriate, during lessons. There were no parental opinions received via Ofsted's Parent View. A range of documentation was studied, for example the record of safeguarding checks made on adults and information on pupils' progress, attainment and attendance.

Context

Since the last inspection, there has been significant change in the senior leadership team. The deputy headteacher left the school in December 2017. In the past academic year, the senior leadership was significantly weakened until the two assistant headteachers took up their posts in September 2018. There has been very little change in teaching staff since the last inspection.

Main findings

There has been significant turbulence in the leadership team since the last inspection. With support brokered by both the local authority and the diocese, you have been highly focused on moving the school forward. You have tackled, and had a positive impact on, the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Your governing body has continued to support you well. Governors have been tireless in establishing support for you during a period of instability in your leadership team and determined to create a new and more effective senior leadership team.

Pupils at the school say that behaviour is still good. They say that they feel safe in the school and that they enjoy coming to school. The atmosphere in the school is welcoming and calm. Pupils are polite to each other and adults as they walk around the building and when they play outside. In lessons, pupils demonstrate that they are eager to learn. The pride they have in the work they produce is highly evident in their books. You and your governors have ensured the safety of pupils in school. You have carefully considered the safety of pupils during recent building changes and have successfully assessed any possible risks at various events, such as 'play and stay' sessions.

You have made excellent use of the support from other leaders in education and the local authority to tackle issues such as the use and accuracy of teacher assessment. Through regular moderation and monitoring, both internally and externally, you have ensured that information about pupils' progress now shows a clear picture of how well pupils are doing. Through pupil progress meetings and checks on the

quality of teaching, you are now ensuring that teachers are using this information more carefully to plan learning. This has, in turn, led to more targeted support programmes for pupils and more tailored professional development for teachers. This has led to improvements in pupils' progress, particularly across key stage 1. All leaders and managers know that the progress of pupils in key stage 2 is not as strong as that of other pupils in the school. This, coupled with a legacy of poor teaching, means that many of these pupils have not made good progress from their starting points.

Disadvantaged pupils are beginning to make better progress than they have done previously. Growing numbers of disadvantaged pupils and the increasingly high mobility of these pupils means that overall progress information does not always reflect the progress that many of these pupils make. The local authority funded a review of pupil premium funding within the school and one of the new senior leaders took on responsibility for this funding from September 2018, to ensure that it continues to be spent well. A significant improvement in pupils' phonics skills was made as a result of well-directed pupil premium funding. The attendance of some disadvantaged pupils is much lower than that of other pupils in the school. The school have tried various strategies to emphasise the importance of regular attendance at school to parents and carers. However, more needs to be done to improve the attendance of these pupils and those who speak English as an additional language. Currently, leaders do not carefully analyse the information they have on attendance and the impact of the strategies they use in order to gain a clearer picture of their effectiveness.

You have undertaken numerous moderation exercises with other schools to ensure that you have an accurate picture of pupils' standards in writing. This, and focused professional development for both teachers and teaching assistants, has led to improvements in the quality of writing across the school. However, in key stage 2, pupils' progress in writing is still not strong enough. Your new senior leaders have a clear idea of what is expected of them and the new literacy leader has introduced training on commercial literacy schemes, and is meeting with teaching assistants on a regular basis, aimed at speeding up school improvement. All leaders acknowledge that the new senior leadership team must immediately play an active and effective role in school improvement to ensure that the school becomes a good school within the next 15 months.

Children in the early years continue to make good progress in an exciting and well-planned environment. Adults encourage children's language acquisition and independent skills well. The early years accommodation has been improved and this has supported children's learning. The outdoor environment requires improvement. However, work to develop this area is already under way and has been planned to give children a safe and stimulating environment in which to learn.

External support

The school has received significant support since the last inspection. The diocese, the governing body and the local authority have brokered very regular and formal support. This support has been received from leaders of other schools in the locality and the diocese. A pupil premium review was funded by the local authority. This support has enabled you to maintain improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and helped to secure the accuracy of assessment information. Although support for this academic year has not yet been formally agreed, both the diocese and the local authority recognise the need for continued external support.

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 Barnsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jo Sharpe
Her Majesty's Inspector