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Mr Rob Barraclough  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (Dewsbury)  
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Dewsbury  
West Yorkshire  
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Dear Mr Barraclough

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (Dewsbury)**

Following my visit to your school on 9 January 2019, 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 three 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 raise the quality and consistency of teaching by embedding the successful strategies already in place
- increase the proportion of pupils who exceed the end of key stage expectations in reading, writing and mathematics
- ensure that pupils receive more frequent instruction on handwriting so that this quickly develops.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and two members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Telephone call discussions took place with a national leader of education, who is supporting the school, and representatives from the local authority and diocese. I evaluated the school improvement plan and spent time reviewing school documentation relating to: pupil assessment information; monitoring of teaching and learning; governance; and external reports from the local authority and supporting school. I observed teaching and learning with you and I spoke to pupils and scrutinised their work. I listened to four pupils read. I also reviewed the checks that are made on the suitability of adults to work with children.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection there have been few staffing changes. Two teachers have left the school. A new teacher joined the school in September 2018 and another returned from maternity leave.

A national leader of education, commissioned through the local authority, is supporting the school.

## **Main findings**

You have been determined to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders and governors are clear about the successes and where there is still work to do to bring about greater consistency in the quality of teaching. Crucially, effective systems to monitor the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning have now been established. This is ensuring that inconsistencies in teaching are identified and addressed more quickly.

Leaders' self-evaluation is honest and accurate and results in actions being effectively prioritised to generate the necessary improvements. The school improvement plan is detailed and is used as a working document. This means that you are able to make adaptations as needed, in light of your monitoring activities. Regular reviews of the plan also support governors in being able to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions and hold them to account.

Leaders have been welcoming of external support through the local authority and have used this to sharpen their monitoring of teaching. A developmental approach has been taken which is valued by staff and is creating a positive learning culture in school. The greater consistency in teaching, which is developing, is also resulting in pupils being able to catch up more rapidly from any previous gaps in their learning. Consequently, attainment and progress have shown continued improvement in 2018 at the end of key stage 2. Pupils made average progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion reaching the expected standard in reading, writing

and mathematics combined was above the national average. You are aware that the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected standard remains below the national average. However, the improvements to teaching and learning are resulting in greater challenge for the most able pupils, in most cases.

You are aware where further improvement is needed to make sure that teaching is appropriately challenging. The newly introduced monitoring system to check the quality and consistency of teaching is providing you with precise information about every teacher's effectiveness. Individual staff receive specific support based on aspects of their teaching which require improvement. Subsequent monitoring focuses on this support and checks that it has had the required impact. Leaders are able to demonstrate the changes in pupils' books following the support which has been provided. Additionally, you have implemented a coaching system for teachers which encourages professional discussion and debate about teaching methods and their effectiveness. This is creating a culture of self-improvement for staff. You are aware that leaders' continual monitoring of teaching will be critical in identifying any emerging issues, for example when new teachers join the school or are new to a year group. However, the new systems are beginning to take hold so that such changes in staffing are having minimal negative effect on pupils' outcomes.

Leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of the expectations for pupils in each year group. They use this knowledge to support teachers' development and provide good exemplars of best practice for others to learn from. Regular moderation of pupils' work is making sure that assessments of pupils' learning are increasingly reliable. The English leader has visited another school to see how the writing curriculum could be improved to enable pupils to more readily apply the knowledge they have gained through a unit of work. This new approach has been trialled and is due to be implemented throughout school.

Leaders' checks on teaching have identified that there is now greater consistency in the use of the marking and feedback policy. Errors in spellings, which pupils have been taught and should know, are identified appropriately. This is allowing pupils to become increasingly independent in making their own improvements to their work. Scrutiny of pupils' work also shows that there are more regular opportunities for pupils to write in the different subjects across the wider curriculum. For example, pupils wrote a report on a rainforest animal, linked to their topic work. We agreed that lesson observations and joint work scrutiny, which took place during the monitoring visit, showed that pupils' handwriting is an aspect of their English work which is not developing as quickly. While pupils are keen to earn a pen licence, specific teaching of handwriting and letter formation is too limited and is delaying pupils' progress with this aspect of their written work.

Reading has been a focus since the last inspection. Pupils say they are encouraged to read regularly and that they enjoy reading. As one pupil said, 'Reading is like jogging for the mind.' The pupils have lots of favourite authors and have enjoyed the class novels which are providing appropriately challenging reading material and

themes for them to discuss. Teachers effectively model processes of reading, such as justifying their answers using reference to the text and identifying and checking the meaning of unfamiliar words. This is helping pupils to attempt more challenging and complex texts with greater confidence. Computer resources are also used well to support individual reading development. Pupils can see how this is helping them to read with greater fluency and speed, while also checking their understanding.

Pupils understand how teachers help them and they are able to talk about the progress they are making. They know how they are challenged in their learning and can describe how they work with partners to help each other. They know that using the subject-specific vocabulary which teachers have identified, known as star words, is important in developing their understanding. Teachers use questioning effectively and encourage pupils to use precise vocabulary in their answers. This is supporting their subject-specific knowledge and understanding. Pupils are also benefiting from the support of teaching assistants who are now being deployed more effectively. They provide the right amount of support and do so discretely without interrupting the flow of learning. Lower-attaining pupils are well supported by the additional models and prompts to help them access age-related learning. The most able pupils are given additional challenges when working independently. However, this challenge was not always as apparent when teachers were introducing new learning. In some lessons, the most able pupils were not moved on in their learning quickly enough.

Governors are taking an increasingly strategic role in monitoring the school's effectiveness. They make regular visits to help them evaluate the accuracy of information from leaders and to review the impact of school improvement actions for themselves. They work alongside the leaders when they carry out work scrutiny and check that whole-school strategies are being followed consistently. This helps them to hold school leaders to account and raise any questions that emerge. Governors also use pupil voice effectively to help them determine the effect of initiatives. For example, the use of booster lessons. They have made sure that where substantial financial contributions have been allocated to school improvement areas, such as for new resources in early years, that these are having the required impact on pupils' outcomes.

### **External support**

As a result of your engagement with external support, the impact of leaders' actions has become more evident over time and is now gathering more rapid momentum. The local authority has provided considerable support and challenge for the school since the last inspection. Termly review meetings have been beneficial in ensuring that leaders' actions are under regular scrutiny. Support from the national leader of education is beginning to help leaders to sharpen their focus on developing teaching and learning through regular and thorough monitoring. As a result of the positive signs of improvement seen in pupils' outcomes, coupled with improving practice in teaching and learning, the diocese offers light-touch support. Leaders are becoming

well equipped to sustain the improvements made so far and to continue making further improvements.

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

Yours sincerely

Kirsty Godfrey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**