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Mr Michael Parker
Headteacher
Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn
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Dear Mr Parker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School Blackburn

Following my visit to your school on 3 October 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken 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 ensure that:

- curriculum plans in all subjects identify clearly what pupils should know and be able to do
- teachers use assessment to identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge and plan effectively for future learning, particularly for those pupils who join the school part-way through the year
- subject leaders check that their curriculum plans are implemented well across the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and other members of the leadership team. We discussed the actions that you have taken since the last inspection. I met with five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I also met with a representative from the local authority.

You joined me on visits to lessons, where we observed pupils learning across a range of subjects. We also visited the Reception class. I spoke with pupils about their learning and their life at school. I also met with a group of parents and carers at the start of the school day.

I considered a range of documents relating to school improvement and safeguarding.

Context

Since the last inspection, several new governors have been appointed. A new full-time teacher was appointed at the start of the academic year following the resignation of a member of staff. Subject leadership responsibility has been reviewed. Some teachers are leading curriculum areas that are new to them.

There have been some changes to the school building since the previous inspection. A dedicated kitchen for school and community use has been established. The pupils' toilets have also been refurbished. There have also been improvements in the outdoor area for children in Reception.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you have designed an ambitious curriculum that reflects the diverse religious beliefs of pupils and their families. Governors, staff and parents and carers share your vision for the future of the school. You and your subject leaders have worked with the local authority to ensure that curriculum plans across a range of subjects enable pupils to achieve well. In some subjects, such as English and mathematics, subject leaders have identified clearly what pupils need to know and be able to do by the end of each year. However, this is not as clear in other subjects. Some subject leaders do not check that curriculum plans are implemented well across the school.

You have been proactive in securing high-quality training for staff. This is helping them to identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge. Teachers use this information to provide help for pupils to catch up quickly. This is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement by the end of key stage 2.

Teachers provide support for those pupils who join the school part-way through the year. However, this work is in its infancy. There are times when teachers do not use

assessment information about what these new arrivals can already do to inform future learning.

There have been improvements to the quality of early years provision. Staff have redesigned the outdoor area for the youngest children at the school. Despite the limited space, leaders in Reception have been very creative in their use of resources. They have created an area that promotes children's curiosity and independence well. It also supports children to develop their early reading and mathematical knowledge.

Most children join Reception with skills and knowledge below those of other children of a similar age. Training for staff enables them to use assessment information to quickly identify the next steps in children's learning. Staff work with other agencies and professionals to ensure that vulnerable children in early years receive the support that they need. You and your staff engage well with parents. This allows parents to help their children at home. For example, parents are keen to attend English-speaking lessons and family workshops. More and more children are ready for Year 1.

Governors have worked well with the local authority. This has helped to provide members of the governing body with appropriate training. This means that governors now provide leaders with a higher level of challenge and support. They have a better understanding of their role and the actions needed to bring about further improvement.

Parents are pleased with the improvements that you and your staff have made. They are positive about their children's progress, especially in reading and mathematics. Parents of older pupils say that their children are prepared well for the next stage of their education. Parents of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are happy with the level of support their children receive.

External support

Your work with the local authority has helped to strengthen the role of subject leaders. This has had a positive effect on the quality of leaders' curriculum planning across the school.

You have also secured a range of support for staff. This includes support from other schools within the Diocese of Salford. The training that staff have received has ensured they have the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to be able to deliver the curriculum well.

The external support from the Diocese of Salford and a local teaching school has had a particularly positive effect on improving early years.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Director of Education

for the Diocese of Salford, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's services for Blackburn with Darwen. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Stringer

Her Majesty's Inspector