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Rosemary Hince
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hince

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's RC Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 June 2021, 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 (2) 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- ensure subject leaders receive appropriate support to enable them to implement their curriculum plans successfully so that pupils can remember more of their learning.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in December 2019, two teachers have left the school and two have been appointed.

Main findings

You and other leaders have continued to drive forward improvements across the school. The curriculum is now broader and more ambitious than it was previously. There is a clear focus on improving achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff are positive about the improvements that have been made across the school. They are particularly appreciative of the consideration that you show for their workload and well-being.

Your action plan highlights the positive impact leaders' actions have had on the identified areas for improvement. There is clear evidence of your high expectations being met in subjects such as English and mathematics. Less clear is the focus on implementing plans for some subjects in the wider curriculum.

Despite recent improvements in reading, you and other leaders have not stood still. Reading remains a key priority. For example, there has been an investment in new books that more closely match the sounds that pupils know. Staff are effectively trained in the teaching of phonics and reading. This means that pupils, including those with SEND, are reading with increasing confidence and fluency. Older pupils told me that they enjoy reading. They spoke with enthusiasm about receiving rewards whenever they reach their reading targets.

At the time of your previous monitoring inspection in December 2019, leaders were implementing a new mathematics curriculum. Teachers' delivery of this curriculum is having a positive impact on pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills. Teachers ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, are given the support that they need to succeed. Pupils told me that they enjoy mathematics. They are fluent in their recall of times tables and number facts. Leaders' checks have identified that some pupils are less secure in their knowledge of problem solving and reasoning. Teachers now teach a short daily session focused on improving pupils' confidence in these areas of learning.

You have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the curriculum. Subject leaders have put well-ordered plans in place. However, delays caused by the pandemic mean a small number of subjects are less developed than you would want them to be. Some leaders have not been able to access subject-specific support to help them improve the curriculum areas that they lead. Pupils are not always able to explain what they know and remember in these subjects.

Governors talked positively about the actions that you and other leaders have taken to improve the school. They understand the local community and serve it well. Governors are now better equipped to hold school leaders to account. They are knowledgeable about the quality of the curriculum and provide you with an appropriate level of challenge and support. Governors are also considerate of your workload and well-being.

Additional support

You are grateful for the support that the local authority provides. You have used this support to strengthen the curriculum and leadership, including governance. The local authority has brokered support from a national leader of education. Leaders have made improvements to the delivery of the curriculum as a result of this support.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority and diocese to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I reviewed leaders' curriculum plans and samples of pupils' work. I visited mathematics lessons alongside the subject leader, listened to pupils read to a familiar adult and spoke with groups of pupils. I also reviewed 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including five free-text responses and 10 staff questionnaires.

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 Salford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

John Tomlinson
Her Majesty's Inspector