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8 July 2021

Clare Roberts
Interim Headteacher
Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School
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L30 2NR

Dear Mrs Roberts

Special measures monitoring inspection of Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Alyson Middlemass, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 9 and 10 June 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

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

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of education for the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sefton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 June 2021

Context

There has been considerable turbulence in senior leadership since the previous inspection. The interim headteacher is the second person to take on this role. The deputy headteacher, who took up his post in September 2020, was required to lead the school during the autumn term due to the previous interim headteacher's absence. A new special educational needs coordinator and a new early years leader have also been appointed, along with three new teachers. A new governing body has been formed. The chair of governors took up his role in December 2020.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Following the previous inspection, there was a period of turmoil in senior leadership, including in governance. This has had a profound impact on the progress that leaders have made in addressing the weaknesses at the school. In recent months, the new leadership team and members of the new governing body have successfully accelerated the pace of change. As a result, pupils' behaviour is better and some curriculum areas are stronger. Leaders have united staff in a common goal and everyone is on board for the next stage of the school's development. Some of the essential building blocks for future improvement are now established. That said, many of the endemic shortcomings identified in the 2019 inspection remain firmly in place. This means that pupils continue to experience an education that does not prepare them for their next steps.

Pupils benefit from well-thought-out curriculum plans in reading and mathematics. Progress has also been made in physical education. However, there remain systemic weaknesses in other subjects, such as geography and history. Subject leadership is still at an early stage of development. It is not clear what leaders expect pupils to learn across curriculum subjects in each year group. The curriculum plans do not provide enough guidance for teachers to ensure that pupils build up their knowledge as well as they should. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Furthermore, it is not clear what knowledge, skills and understanding leaders expect children in the early years to develop across all areas of learning.

Leaders' plans for improvement are imprecise and do not set out a clear and ambitious vision for developing the quality of education. The plans do not include clear milestones of what success will look like over time. This makes it difficult for leaders, including governors, to check pupils' progress and ensure that key developments are taking place.

Staff are very positive about the new leadership team. They told us that they feel well supported by leaders. Staff appreciate the steps that leaders have taken to help

them manage their workload. A programme of training and support is beginning to help staff to raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve, and to ensure a consistent approach to the delivery of the curriculum.

New leaders have wasted no time in improving pupils' behaviour. Staff told us that behaviour has been transformed since the interim headteacher took up her role. They feel well supported in this key aspect of their work. There is a friendly atmosphere around the school. Pupils told us that lessons are rarely disrupted like they used to be. Pupils also said that they enjoy playtimes more than before. They particularly enjoy taking part in the games that staff organise for them during lunchtimes. Pupils told us that bullying is extremely rare and that adults are helpful in sorting out any friendship issues.

Leaders have secured improvements to the reading curriculum. Staff feel more confident teaching phonics due to the ongoing training and support that they are receiving. The reading curriculum for older pupils is also stronger than it has been in the past. Pupils appreciate the wider range of reading material that is now available. Pupils are reading more regularly both in school and at home. Teachers also feel better prepared to support weaker readers as they move through key stage 2. This is helping all pupils, including those with SEND, to become more fluent and accurate readers.

The new governing body fully understands its role in helping to drive and monitor improvements at the school. It has met with staff to discuss the concerns that staff had expressed after the previous inspection. That said, governors are in the early stages of holding leaders to account for their improvements to the school's curriculum and the overall quality of pupils' education.

Additional support

Ofsted judged the local authority's statement of action to be not fit for purpose. This is because it does not indicate well enough how it will support the school in the next stage of its journey. The local authority has not reviewed and updated its plans to support the school in a timely manner.

Leaders have made effective use of the support provided by the local authority and the archdiocese to strengthen teaching. Training for staff in reading and mathematics is helping to improve the curriculums in these subjects and beginning to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, the support has not gone far enough to ensure that pupils benefit from a rich curriculum.

Evidence

During this inspection we spoke with: senior and middle leaders; staff; pupils; representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors; a

representative of the archdiocese; and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection.

We scrutinised curriculum plans. We also looked at samples of pupils' work and listened to pupils reading. We also visited lessons and observed pupils' behaviour during playtimes. We considered the 16 responses recorded on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We also considered the 18 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.