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Nicola Clarke
Principal
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Dear Mrs Clarke

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 29 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 two 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.

The school should take further action to:

- continue to work with families to ensure that pupils attend school regularly, so they do not miss out on their education
- develop how assessment is used, so that it supports the teaching of the curriculum and provides the right information on pupils' progress.

Context

The senior leadership team, who had recently joined the school at the time of the last section 5 inspection in September 2019, remains the same. In September 2020, a new early years leader joined the school. A new chief executive officer (CEO) of the Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership (KCSP) trust started in May 2021.

Main findings

You and the trust show an unfaltering commitment to provide the best education for the pupils in your care. Your Catholic vision of 'Love Jesus, love learning, love each other' is promoting higher expectations of everyone. You are steadfast in wanting pupils to leave your school with the knowledge, skills and self-belief to fulfil their ambitions. The trust is fully involved and keeps a close eye on the school improvement steps you are taking.

Your work on designing a brand-new curriculum nears completion, with computing still to be finalised. Subject leaders show a deeper understanding of what needs to be taught, and when, in their subject. The essential knowledge that pupils will learn is well sequenced, starting in early years. Your focus now is on supporting your staff to deliver this new curriculum.

Drawing on the expertise of the trust, you are establishing a more consistent approach to teaching the curriculum. This includes strengthening teachers' subject knowledge, presenting information to pupils in smaller steps and asking them more probing questions. Work set is increasingly ambitious for all pupils. In class, staff are meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They are adapting learning to enable pupils to access what is taught. In early years, staff are working skilfully to develop children's learning inside and outside the classroom.

Assessment is at an early stage, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics. Teachers' assessments do not yet closely align with the curriculum. These assessment tasks are not enabling teachers to check precisely what pupils know and remember from the taught curriculum. Consequently, they are adding unnecessary workload for teachers.

Your high expectations of everyone are ensuring a calm and orderly environment throughout school. In lessons, pupils are showing positive attitudes to learning. Adults are supporting pupils well in following rules and expectations.

You are determined that when children start in Reception they learn to read straight away. Through the support of a specialist phonics consultant, you have revamped the teaching of phonics. Staff are well trained in delivering the structured phonics programme. They use effective teaching strategies and resources to help pupils learn and remember their sounds. Pupils are provided with the books from the programme in school and at home to practise their reading.

At the time of the additional, remote inspection earlier in March, you were aware that many pupils in Reception and Year 1 were behind on the phonics programme as a result of the pandemic. Since then, you have deployed a member of staff to focus solely on providing additional one-to-one sessions. These sessions are helping pupils to learn sounds securely and practise reading fluently. Despite leaders' efforts, pupils' attendance remains a barrier to learning. Some pupils are missing too much school and so are now falling even further behind in their reading.

Additional support

Trust leaders are providing strong support and challenge to improve the school. In addition, the trust is funding external advisers to support leaders of early years, phonics, science and mathematics. You are also working with English and mathematics hubs and a national leader of education.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the executive principal, the vice-principal, the CEO of the KCSP trust, the chair of the board of trustees and representatives from the local academy committee, including the chair, to discuss the actions taken to improve the school since the last inspection. I also spoke with the trust's senior primary improvement adviser, who is supporting the school.

I discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, spoke to pupils, visited lessons and observed pupils reading to staff. I considered 24 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 42 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, including 22 free-text responses. I reviewed the school improvement plan and external monitoring reports. I scrutinised the single central record for pre-employment checks.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO of the KCSP trust, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Southwark, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

James Broadbridge
Her Majesty's Inspector