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Carolyn Mashiter
Headteacher
Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Mashiter

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School, Church

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 25 April 2024, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, governors and the local authority the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, listened to pupils read and met with three subject leaders. I also considered any responses to Ofsted Parent View. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- Ensure that, where necessary, teachers make suitable adaptations so that some pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn the curriculum knowledge effectively.

Main findings

There have been changes in staffing since the previous inspection. Some staff who were present at the previous inspection are no longer at the school. A new, temporary deputy headteacher is working at the school. Two classes are currently being taught by temporary teachers. A new SEND coordinator works at the school. In addition, a few governors who have joined the governing body.

Since the previous inspection, the school has acted decisively and spent some considerable time ensuring that the required staff team was put in place. Although this has taken some time with two final appointments to be made, the leadership and staffing structure are now more stable than at the time of the previous inspection. The addition of new governors has also strengthened the skills and knowledge of the governing body. Despite the period of instability, the school is united in its determination to improve the quality of education for pupils. Collectively, the school is now in a stronger position than in the past to tackle the weaknesses which were identified at the previous inspection.

Subject leadership is improving. Subject leaders have received effective training which is beginning to allow them to have a greater oversight of their areas of responsibility. They have benefitted from some significant training to enable them to keep more relevant checks on their areas of responsibility. Subject leaders are beginning to identify where the curriculum is delivered expertly. In addition, they are increasingly able to spot where further support and guidance is needed for different staff. This means that staff are receiving more effective support to improve their practice than previously.

Revitalising the school curriculum has been an essential focus for the school. The school has ensured that the curriculum on offer for pupils is more appropriate and relevant. Through updated curriculum training, teachers' understanding of the standards which pupils should reach in different subject areas is increasing. This is an improvement from the past. Teachers' expectations for pupils' achievement are higher than they were previously. There are emerging signs of progress for current pupils. For example, work in pupils' books shows that they have a more secure understanding of the curriculum.

The updated curriculum is being implemented in different subjects with increasing effectiveness. This is beginning to bear fruit. Staff have an increasingly secure understanding of what pupils should know in different curriculum subjects. Typically, teachers identify activities which help pupils to learn the curriculum. However, some inconsistencies remain in the way that teachers deliver some aspects of the curriculum. For example, in some instances, adaptations that teachers make for pupils, including those with SEND to access the curriculum, are not as effective as they could be. This means that, at times, pupils do not learn as well as they could.

As part of the curriculum development, the school has revamped assessment strategies in many subjects to ensure that these are fit for purpose. Teachers have received the necessary training to support this improvement. They use these new assessment strategies with more purpose than they did in the past. This is because they understand what they should be assessing with regard to pupils' knowledge of different topics. When using assessment strategies in lessons, teachers are beginning to check on what pupils know and remember more effectively. With improved regularity, they identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge. The tide is beginning to turn in ensuring that gaps in pupils' understanding reduce over time. However, due to the previously weak curriculum, gaps in pupils' knowledge remain.

The school has prioritised reading. Pupils enjoy coming to the new school library which provides opportunities for them to read high-quality texts. The phonics programme has been strengthened and re-introduced. Staff have received up-to-date training to improve their delivery of the programme. This training means that pupils now benefit from a more consistently delivered curriculum by staff with improved subject knowledge. However, because of previously weak phonics delivery, gaps remain in pupils' understanding. Until the new assessment strategies were put into place, these gaps in understanding were not identified as well as they needed to be. This is now beginning to change. Pupils know more sounds than they previously did. Typically, the books that pupils read match the sounds that they know.

Governors and the local authority brokered appropriate support to help ensure that the school improves the quality of education on offer to pupils. The school and governors have used this support well to gain a greater understanding of the quality of education. For example, governors keep a close eye on the three-weekly improvement targets which the school sets. This ensures that they have a better understanding of how well the school is improving. It also gives governors the opportunity to challenge the school when improvements are not happening with enough momentum.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors, the director of education for the Diocese of Salford, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Perkins
His Majesty's Inspector