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Mr D Copley
St Francis Catholic Primary School
Myers Lane
Bradford
West Yorkshire
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Dear Mr Copley

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Jane Hughes, additional inspector, to your school on 19 and 20 October, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Bradford, Education Bradford and the Diocese of Leeds.

Yours sincerely

Katrina Gueli

Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of St Francis Catholic Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 19 and 20 October 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and met with the headteacher, senior leadership team, the chair of governors, representatives of Education Bradford and groups of pupils.

Context

Since the time of the inspection in May 2009, three teachers have left the school, one teacher has been appointed on a temporary contract and there have been several changes to the senior leadership team.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Results of the most recent assessments indicate that attainment at Key Stage 1 is broadly in line with national averages overall but the proportion of pupils reaching the highest levels expected for their age is below average. At Key Stage 2, unvalidated national test results indicate that attainment rose slightly at Level 4 in mathematics and science but there was a significant decline in the number of pupils attaining Level 4 in English, due in part to the unexpectedly low attainment of many pupils in writing. The proportion of pupils gaining Level 4 in English and mathematics declined significantly and is now below the government target for this measure. Similarly to Year 2, the proportion of Year 6 pupils gaining the highest level is below average in all three core subjects, reflecting the school's history of limited challenge and low teacher expectations, particularly for higher attaining pupils. The school's own monitoring and inspection findings confirm that pupils' learning in lessons in different year groups still varies from good to inadequate and too often progress is satisfactory or less than satisfactory. Consequently, the pupils' previous underachievement is not yet being successfully addressed and their progress remains inadequate overall at both key stages.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2, particularly of the more able pupils – inadequate.



The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is inconsistent, with lessons seen during the monitoring inspection ranging from good to inadequate, a picture reflected in the outcomes of the school's own recent monitoring. While some effective professional development has taken place, ongoing turbulence within the staff team is diluting its impact on improving the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, classrooms offer brighter and more supportive learning environments and some features of teaching have improved since the last inspection. For example, older pupils say that the newly created literacy and numeracy working walls provide a helpful range of 'unique tips' to encourage their independent learning during lessons and they appreciate these new features. However, the quality and usefulness of these working walls varies. Some contain fully worked examples by teachers and pupils while others are still relatively bare and of more limited value as an independent learning tool. Teachers are also making use of 'talking partners' in lessons with varying degrees of success. In the best lessons, pupils engage more actively in their learning. Where less successful, pupils are quickly distracted and chat about things unrelated to the lesson. There are still too frequent occasions in lessons where pupils show a reluctance to put pen to paper, as teachers do not always imbue the required levels of urgency associated with a task. Information and communication technology is not being used widely to engage pupils more actively in their learning. A common weakness across lessons is the variable challenge provided for different groups of learners, particularly higher attaining pupils. There is little sign of improvement in this aspect of teaching and the school recognises that much more remains to be done in terms of accelerating the progress of all pupils.

The school is working hard to improve the accuracy of teacher assessment, utilising external advanced skills teachers to develop staff understanding and confidence in assessment, with an initial focus on pupils' writing. As a result, some teachers have a clearer idea of what pupils know and what they need to learn next. However, although some teachers are making good use of this information to plan appropriate activities in lessons, not all staff are yet at this stage. Effective systems have been introduced to track pupils' progress through each year group and across the school, and secure baseline data of pupils' current attainment are being collected. There is some evidence of improvement in the quality of marking of pupils' work. For example, some teachers now provide detailed feedback in pupils' exercise books so that they know what they are doing well and what they need to do next to improve. There is also some good modelling of how best to set out work or to find a solution. However, great inconsistencies remain and too often, marking is superficial and provides little or no guidance to pupils on how to improve. Teachers are beginning



to engage pupils more in their own learning and when given the opportunity, pupils enjoy assessing how well they have done at the end of lessons. Pupils confirm that they have targets for literacy and numeracy and some pupils can recall these without looking them up. However, there is no consistent method of recording targets or assessing pupils' progress towards achieving them. Parents are made aware of their children's targets and this is beginning to help them to support children's learning at home more easily.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good and has the necessary rigour, pace and challenge in all classes – inadequate.
- Improve the accuracy of assessments and use assessment information systematically to build on what pupils already know and to show pupils clearly how they can improve their work further – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has been robust in his approach to addressing identified weaknesses in teaching and learning and increasing the capacity of the senior leadership team to bring about the necessary improvement. Roles and expectations of all senior leaders have been clarified and all members of the senior team are committed to leading improvement in their respective areas. Systems to track pupils' progress more rigorously are developing and termly meetings involving individual teachers and the senior leadership team are increasing the accountability of class teachers for securing pupils' progress. A recent detailed review conducted in conjunction with the new School Improvement Partner has provided a useful evaluation of current strengths and urgent priorities to be addressed. However, planning to address areas for development lacks coherence in relation to some areas for improvement and does not include sufficiently clear milestones or success criteria for all actions. This is currently limiting the effectiveness with which the school can evaluate its progress and impact in relation to each area for improvement. Since the last inspection, governors have become more aware of the significant development that the school requires. New governor appointments, the involvement of the chair of governors in regular reviews of the school's progress with Education Bradford, and updates from the headteacher are helping the governing body to be better placed to monitor the school's progress.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that leaders take swift and effective action to address the weaknesses and to improve the school's performance, and that they plan and measure the impact of their actions against clear criteria – satisfactory



External support

Progress and impact in relation to the actions identified in the Education Bradford statement of action has been variable. This has been due in part to the need for Education Bradford to review and amend planned support as they developed a clearer understanding of the school's significant weaknesses following the inspection. Since September 2009, changes to the structure of external support and personnel involved has improved the effectiveness of working relationships with the school and increased the coherence of the support being offered. The school is also now part of the Improving Schools Programme with associated consultant involvement and the termly external review of pupils' attainment. Education Bradford is continuing to work with the Diocese of Leeds to arrange a secondment to the school to increase leadership capacity. Close working with the local authority human resources team is helping the school to address the remaining significant staffing issues.