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Rosemary Sherry
Acting headteacher
Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School
Bedwell Crescent
Stevenage
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Dear Mrs Sherry

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 January 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and representatives from the governing body. A representative of the local authority was contacted by phone. The school's action plan was evaluated. The acting headteacher led a brief tour of the school.

Context

Since the last inspection the deputy headteacher has stepped up as acting headteacher to cover the headteacher's long-term absence. The leadership and management structure has been revised; it has doubled in size. The governing body is in the process of appointing two foundation governors.

Main findings

Leaders and managers are eager to move the school to good. They have devised a suitable plan to achieve their goals. Actions are relevant and useful, although completion dates are too vague. Lead roles and those checking for improvement are clearly identified. Swift action has already improved provision. Additional time is

allocated to the teaching of mathematics and 'maths-friendly' resources, guidance and prompts are available in every classroom to support pupils' learning.

The local authority agreed the school's targets for achievement. They are not high enough for pupils in Key Stage 1. Those for pupils in Key Stage 2 are demanding. However, targets have not been set for the proportions of pupils who should make better than expected progress in both key stages. Additional funding (Pupil Premium) for eligible pupils is allocated to provide extra help. Teachers are receiving training to help them to plan work with a greater level of difficulty for pupils who are able mathematicians.

Arrangements for managing teachers' performance require revision to ensure staff achieve the latest teachers' standards. Governor training is planned to develop their skills in monitoring the school's work. On its completion, the governing body should arrange an external review of its performance.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommends that further action is taken to:

- ensure that specific dates are set for the completion of planned actions so that those responsible for monitoring can check that deadlines are met
- adjust the targets set for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to 'above the minimum expected' nationally
- set extra targets for the proportions of pupils that should make more than expected progress
- arrange an external review of governance once governor training has been completed.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority assisted the school in devising a suitable action plan. It has arranged for a headteacher from a local high-performing school to support the leadership team. Checks for progress are regular, including an external review this term and one led by school improvement officers from the local authority early next term.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education for Hertfordshire and the Archdiocese of Westminster.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector