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30 April 2013

Mr G McGlasson-West
Headteacher
St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School
Howson Road
London
SE4 2BB

Dear Mr McGlasson-West

Monitoring inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary School, Lewisham

Following my visit to your school on 30 April 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 December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and an assistant headteacher, three other teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors and two representatives from the local authority. We carried out a tour of the school together, visiting lessons in all year groups. I looked at a range of documents, including the school's data on pupils' achievement, reviews carried out by the local authority and governors' reports on visits to the school. I also evaluated the school's Raising Attainment Plan.

Context

Since the inspection, the Reception class teacher has left the school. The post is being covered by a long-term supply teacher until the end of term and the school

hopes to make a permanent appointment for September 2013. A new representative from the local authority has been appointed to the governing body.

Main findings

The headteacher, his senior team and governors are demonstrating the skills, drive and determination necessary to ensure the school becomes good by the time of its next inspection. An effective Raising Attainment Plan, which has been shared with parents, provides a good basis for securing the required improvements. The plan focuses appropriately on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and sets out the actions to be taken, the member of staff responsible and how progress will be monitored. The plan is broken down into weekly milestones that enable leaders to ensure they are on track. Most importantly, it sets out very clear and challenging targets with regard to pupils' progress. Improved use of data is enabling staff to have a much clearer understanding of how well individual pupils are progressing from their varying starting points. Current data show clear improvements in pupils' progress, though this is still not fully consistent across the school.

School monitoring information, together with evidence from visits from a local authority adviser, shows that the quality of teaching is improving. More teaching is consistently good and an increasing proportion is outstanding. These improvements are due to staff training which addresses the areas for improvement identified by inspectors together with more rigorous systems of monitoring and evaluation. For example, the subject leaders for mathematics and literacy now regularly visit lessons to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and ensure that all staff are implementing the lessons learned from training. During this visit I saw clear evidence of improvement in the quality of marking in books and of more regular opportunities for pupils to engage in good quality dialogue about their learning. Pupils told me how much they enjoy the 'all, most, some' learning objectives because they said, it gives them a greater sense of what they can achieve and makes them want to do even better. Nevertheless, leaders and managers know that some teaching still requires improvement in order to be good.

Governors are playing a key role in helping the school to improve. They have strengthened their understanding of the quality of teaching and learning through focused visits, for example to look at mathematics teaching. This has enabled them to monitor the impact of strategies to improve marking and teachers' use of subject specific vocabulary in mathematics. Governors have ensured they are up to date with the latest information about pupils' progress through scrutinising the School Data Dashboard. However, they recognise that they would benefit from refresher training in the use of performance data to measure pupils' progress.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- secure refresher training for governors to help strengthen their skills in evaluating school performance data

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection. In the interim, we agreed that you will send me an update on the school's progress in improving teaching and raising pupils' achievement in July 2013 together with pupils' results in the end of year National Curriculum tests.

External support

The school benefits from good quality support from the local authority. This includes regular monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance, training for staff and individual support for newly qualified teachers. The local authority has also worked with the school to strengthen the accuracy of assessment.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lewisham and the Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector