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Mrs Maria Cooper
Headteacher
St Joseph's RC Primary School, Todmorden
Wellington Road
Todmorden
Lancashire
OL14 5HP

Dear Mrs Cooper

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St Joseph's RC Primary School, Todmorden, Calderdale

Following my visit to your school on 1 May 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 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and a senior colleague, a local leader of education, a group of pupils, the Chair of the outgoing Interim Executive Board with the Chair of the incoming Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The inspector evaluated a range of documentation including: the school improvement plan; monitoring reports and records of lesson observations. In addition, the headteacher took the HMI on a tour of the school to look briefly at teaching and learning and the improvements made to provision since the inspection.

Context

The Interim Executive Board has handed over the governance of the school to a newly formed governing body. This new group came into being very recently and will be led by a chair with extensive knowledge and experience of school governance. Since the inspection in February, the Diocese has continued to support school leaders with the appointment of a local leader of education from a school in another authority.

Main findings

There are positive signs that the school has moved forward well in the weeks since the inspection. Senior leaders and governors accept that the priorities identified for improvement are the right ones for the school. There is clear understanding of why the school is not yet good and the action required. Immediate action has been taken to:

- strengthen the quality of teaching and learning
- raise teachers' awareness of what constitutes effective practice in pupils' learning
- make checks on the quality of teaching more rigorous
- improve the focus of whole-school action planning

The revised school improvement plan addresses the main areas that need improvement. However, some of the targets and milestones for measuring success are not as sharp as they could be. This makes it difficult for leaders and governors to assess the impact of actions over-time.

Systems to monitor the quality of teaching more effectively are gathering pace. Senior leaders are regularly checking on the quality of lessons and pupils' work. Further improvements are required in highlighting the achievement of pupils and groups of pupils in lessons and in measuring the impact of teaching on pupils' progress more accurately.

The Interim Executive Board has provided a clear steer for the school in the weeks following the inspection. The early actions of the new governing body are demonstrating potential for governors to impact more effectively on school improvement.

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, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- sharpen the school improvement plan to include clear and measurable targets against which success can be judged over-time
- strengthen feedback to teachers on the progress and achievement of pupils in lessons.

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

External support

The support from the local authority is well tailored to the school's most pressing priorities and includes elements of support and challenge to senior leaders and staff. This is helping to strengthen leadership and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Calderdale.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector