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Ruth Saul
Acting Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Scratton Road
Stanford-le-Hope
SS17 0PA

Dear Miss Saul

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 07 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and the headteacher advisor, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school's improvement plans. I visited all of the classrooms with you. I scrutinized documents relating to pupil progress and the outcomes of monitoring activities. I discussed the findings of my visit with you, the headteacher advisor, a representative from the local authority, members of the governing body and members of the progress board.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, one teacher has left the school and a temporary teacher covers the vacancy. Another teacher is on long-term sick leave and a temporary teacher is teaching the class. The headteacher is on sick leave and the deputy is acting as the headteacher. Five teachers have resigned and will be leaving at the end of the summer term. Governors have appointed one teacher to begin at the end of the summer term and the school is currently recruiting to fill the other

posts. The headteacher of a local Catholic primary school is supporting the acting headteacher in the headteacher's absence. A progress board has been set up to monitor the progress of the school. One teacher governor has been elected to fill a vacancy on the governing body.

Main findings

The acting headteacher is monitoring teaching and learning more rigorously and using a range of evidence to gain a view of teaching over time. This includes evidence from lesson observations, pupils' progress data and evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' work. This is an appropriate approach to ensure that teachers are held to account for the progress of all pupils. However sometimes judgements about the quality of teaching in lesson observations are too generous when pupils' progress is not given a high enough priority.

Most classrooms are well-ordered environments where attitudes to learning are positive. There have been some improvements to the Reception indoor and outdoor learning areas. More needs to be done however to ensure that all Reception children have equal access to the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. This is not yet the case for those children who are working in the Year 1 and Reception classroom.

The governing body is more rigorously monitoring and challenging the work of the school. Governors have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have a better understanding of the impact of pupil premium funding and the pay structure of teachers, which they compare with the good information they receive about the quality of teaching.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching take full account of the progress pupils make during lessons and that this takes in the highest priority in making judgements
- ensure that all Reception children have equal access to the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority is providing good support to the school to improve teaching and leadership. The school improvement manager is co-ordinating a high level of support that is beginning to have a positive impact. Improvement consultants visit regularly to help develop the improvement plans and provide training for governors to

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understand their role in monitoring the plans. A member of the improving schools team has been working in the school since May, coaching members of staff to improve teaching and supporting middle leaders to develop their action plans. An early education improvement officer is supporting improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage. An advisory headteacher visits the school regularly to support the acting headteacher and establishing systems to monitor the school more rigorously. The progress board has co-opted members with experience of school leadership and improvement including a local leader of education.

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

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector