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Jayne Keegan-Hobbs
Headteacher
St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School
Lindale Drive
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Wolverhampton
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Dear Mrs Keegan-Hobbs

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

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with yourself, the Chair and Vice Chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including information about pupils' achievement, feedback to teachers following reviews of work and lesson observations and minutes from governors' meetings. During this visit, you joined me on a short visit to each classroom to talk to pupils and look at the work in their books.

Context

Since the last inspection one teacher, who was the literacy leader, has left the school and has been replaced temporarily until July, with two experienced teachers in a job share role. There is no-one currently fulfilling the role of literacy leader. Two additional teachers have been appointed to start in September. One of these will be

the literacy leader. Two additional classrooms are being built and, in September, there will be four classes instead of the current three.

Main findings

You responded quickly and positively to the findings of the section 5 inspection. You demonstrate determination and enthusiasm to make the school good as soon as possible. The school's action plan shows a sharp focus on the actions needed to improve the school and has clearly defined timescales. The plan states clearly who will monitor and evaluate the actions taken and the impact on pupils' learning. The school's review of the action plan shows progress towards the areas for improvement. This is due to the commitment of all staff and governors to the process of improvement.

As a result of the effective way you have been coaching teachers and the opportunity they have been given to visit other local good schools, there is evidence, from the school's monitoring, that teaching is improving across the school. Your regular pupil progress meetings show that teachers are becoming more confident when assessing pupils' work. During my visits to lessons and when I looked through pupils' books I observed that activities are increasingly well matched to the needs and abilities of most pupils. However, this is not always the case for the lower ability pupils, particularly in literacy. When the new literacy leader takes up post in September, ensuring work is well matched to the needs of all pupils should be a priority. Information about how well pupils are progressing is collected and analysed regularly, however the system being used does not provide sufficiently detailed information. It is not showing precisely enough how much progress pupils make each term.

In English and mathematics older pupils know the level at which they are working because they now have targets in their books that shows them what they need to do to improve. During my visits to lessons teaching assistants were being used effectively with groups of pupils in all classes, to support the development of more brisk paced learning.

Better marking is beginning to show pupils how they can improve their learning however this is not yet consistent across the school. Some teachers are not yet giving pupils detailed enough information on how to improve their work and opportunities are being missed for pupils to accelerate the progress they make.

The Governing Body has responded very positively to the findings of the last inspection and has taken decisive action. They have accessed relevant training and are now more effective in holding senior leaders to account. They are involved in decision making on whole school issues and have a clear understanding of the schools' strengths and weaknesses. They ask challenging questions about the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils. Governors visit the school more regularly to check for themselves that all pupils are being helped to make better progress.

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:

- implement a more precise tracking system that accurately records termly assessment information to ensure all pupils are making at least good progress.
- make sure that all teachers' marking is sufficiently detailed to help pupils improve their work
- provide a thorough induction process for the new literacy leader to enable her to quickly and effectively monitor the progress pupils make in this subject and ensure work is matched to the needs of all pupils.

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 has provided the school with good support. Training for governors has been particularly effective in helping them to monitor the progress of the school more effectively. Making links with another local school has been helpful in improving the practice of teachers and subject leaders. There is further scope for support with the implementation of a system that tracks more effectively the progress pupils make.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Howie
Her Majesty's Inspector