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9 July 2013

Mr Donal McCarthy
Headteacher
Regina Coeli Catholic Primary School
173 Pampisford Road
South Croydon
Surrey
CR2 6DF

Dear Mr McCarthy

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Regina Coeli Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 July 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, six senior leaders, five members and the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school development plan was considered along with other documentation. I carried out short visits to six lessons, accompanied by two middle leaders.

Context

There have been no significant staff changes since the recent inspection which judged the school to require improvement. The Diocesan Board on the recommendation of the local authority has appointed two new Foundation Governors, with specific experience and expertise to strengthen the work of the governing body. In May 2013, a teaching and learning review was conducted by five officers of the local authority alongside senior leaders in school. On 19 June 2013,

the local authority issued a warning notice to the governing body noting significant concerns. These relate to standards of achievement at the school, and the capacity of the school's leadership to improve outcomes for pupils at a rapid enough rate to secure appropriate standards of attainment and progress so that the school will be able to be judged good at its next inspection.

This visit focused specifically on the quality of teaching and learning, and the leadership and management of the school.

Main findings

During the visit, you did not convey a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what is needed for improvement. The staff do not work as an effective team. You believe the school to be much better than current results and external evaluations suggest. The governing body is knowledgeable and committed and has a secure understanding of the school. The external review of governance conducted in June 2013 states *'it is clear that the governing body are developing in strength and becoming more confident to carry out their statutory responsibilities'*. However, their plans for monitoring and supporting the school have been hindered by the lack of information given to them pertaining to standards in lessons, national tests, and information regarding the performance management of senior staff. Consequently, they are not well placed to help the school improve rapidly. The school improvement plan contains a number of positive actions. However, it does not place enough emphasis on the core business of teaching and learning or consider what training might be required to ensure maximum impact.

At present, there is a very large senior leadership team. Senior leaders are responsible for specific management activities, some overlapping without any one person having a secure overview. For example, there are three phase leaders, an Early Years Foundation Stage leader and subject leaders. Some leaders are relatively new in post and need more intensive support to guide them in their role. Consequently, their effectiveness varies; some are better placed than others to lead the necessary improvements. They monitor their areas of responsibility but systems for following up their findings are not robust. Furthermore, not all have the training to fully appreciate the relationship between the collection and analysis of performance data, the quality of teaching, the impact of curricular developments, and continuing professional development. The need to raise achievement is not well served by this piecemeal management activity. The readiness of staff to develop their practice means the school is well placed to review leadership roles, revise action plans, and couple these with an appropriate professional development programme. In the lessons observed, some teachers demonstrated the potential to improve, given appropriate guidance, training and support. In discussion with HMI, teachers showed an encouraging readiness to reflect on their teaching and explore ways to improve their practice.

Although there is some evidence of accelerated progress in Year 6, pupils throughout the school still make uneven progress. There is still too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching and the monitoring of improvement by senior leaders lacks sufficient rigour. The school has a vast amount of information on pupils' attainment but does not always use this well to tackle underachievement as soon as it arises. As a result there remains significant inequality relating to the progress that pupils of different abilities make as they move up through the school. The school's ability to promote equality and tackle discrimination is therefore compromised. School leaders are having too little impact on the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils and are not, therefore, demonstrating the capacity to improve.

The local authority's review of teaching and learning in May 2013 provided school leaders with much valuable advice regarding strengths and areas to improve. The review's findings are overall, in line with the findings of this monitoring inspection. The pace of teaching is too slow and, too often, teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils. Some lessons fail to engage pupils in their learning. For example, during one lesson pupils were observed continuing to talk whilst the teacher was attempting to practise a mathematical skill with them. The quantity of work produced by pupils during a significant proportion of the lessons seen was minimal.

Senior leaders are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. 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 carried out the monitoring role assiduously and the minutes of these regular meetings and reviews leave no doubt about their concerns regarding the slow pace of improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Kekshan Salaria
Her Majesty's Inspector