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17th September

Mrs K Hill
Headteacher
St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Manor House Road
Wednesbury
WS10 9PN

Dear Mrs Hill

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

Following my visit to your school on 17th September, 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- ensure that more children achieve the higher levels in mathematics
- ensure progress meetings take place more regularly so that leadership can rapidly identify and address underachievement
- establish effective systems to share outstanding teaching across the school
- establish links with an outstanding school to further support the new senior leaders.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, the Governing Body and five other governors. I also met with a representative of the local authority, middle leaders and a group of pupils. The school's improvement plans were evaluated. A range of documentation was

reviewed including the latest information about pupils' progress and written feedback to teachers following lessons observations and reviews of teachers' marking. During the visit, you and the deputy headteacher joined me on brief visits to all classes.

Context

Since the inspection one additional teacher has been appointed.

Main findings

You and other senior leaders are responding to the issues identified in the recent inspection with urgency. You have set up programmes of training and support to improve the quality of teaching, particularly of mathematics. You have purchased new resources and support from an external consultant to improve teachers' subject knowledge. This has contributed to the better rates of progress for pupils in mathematics. Pupils talk positively about the changes that have been made to the way mathematics lessons are taught. They value the new mathematical equipment and feel that it helps them to find different ways of solving problems. However, you recognise that not enough pupils are achieving higher levels in mathematics.

You have improved the school's systems for checking pupils' progress. You are now able to check the progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils. Teachers are clearer about what is expected and how they will be held accountable for pupils' achievement. Senior leaders meet with teachers half-termly to check pupils' progress and address any underachievement. However, this means that underachievement is not always quickly dealt with.

Senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and pupils' work. Feedback to teachers identifies successful practice and where further improvements are required. Leaders have not yet established effective systems for using the best teaching within the school for training purposes. As a result, outstanding practice is not regularly shared and used effectively. I recommend that you establish a link with an outstanding school so that new senior leaders can develop strategic leadership skills, share their own outstanding practice more effectively and lead learning across the school.

You have quickly taken actions to improve communication and relationships with parents. You have introduced a new texting service, commissioned a new website and improved the amount of information sent to parents. Many parents are responding positively to the new arrangements and have recently been into school to meet the teachers and talk about the plans for the new school year.

Governors have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to become 'good'. They have responded rapidly to the inspection findings and have taken a range of appropriate actions. They have fully supported the decision to purchase new mathematical equipment and to organise external training for teachers.

Documentation shows that governors are closely checking the impact of these changes on pupils' achievement.

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

Through the regular visits from the local authority adviser you receive an appropriate level of support and challenge. The local authority reviews have helped you to focus on the main areas of weakness and take suitable action. The next full review is due on 2nd October 2013.

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

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram
Her Majesty's Inspector