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12 May 2014

Mrs M Newsham
Headteacher
St Clare's Catholic Primary School
Fagley Road
Fagley
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD2 3JD

Dear Mrs Newsham

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Clare's Catholic Primary School, Bradford

Following my visit to your school on 9 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings. 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 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- Sharpen the post-Ofsted action plan to include periodic milestones for the quality of teaching and pupil achievement so that, all staff know your expectations, can be held to account more robustly for their contribution to school improvement and that accurate checks can be made by governors on how well the school is doing.
- Ensure that the planned support for those teachers whose teaching requires improvement goes ahead, no matter what, in order to ensure that all teaching is consistently good by the December milestone you have now set.
- Ensure that the gifted mathematicians in school are supported and challenged to achieve the significantly higher levels they are capable of.

The local authority should take further action to ensure that school is given high priority in accessing support from human resources to tackle staff absence.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher and mathematics lead, the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. We visited lessons, spoke with pupils and undertook a work scrutiny in mathematics.

Context

There have been no changes to staffing since the inspection, although you have increased the working days of a part-time teacher to provide continuity and consistency in teaching for the Year 3 class.

Main findings

You have a very accurate view of where the school is at and have been ably supported in this by the deputy headteacher and the mathematics subject leader. The actions you have taken since the inspection are beginning to bear fruit and this can be seen in the progress pupils are now making. You recognise there is still some way to go to ensure that teaching is consistently good.

It is clear to see that the intermittent absence of a member of staff has stalled the progress of the Year 3 pupils but, also disrupted the plans you had during the spring term to use the leaders of mathematics and English to support others to improve their teaching. You have tried to provide some consistency and continuity for Year 3 by ensuring the class teaching assistant has remained with the class at all times and by making use of other staff in school to teach the class. You and the governors recognise that this cannot continue and you have taken action, despite the financial drain on the budget, to ensure that these teachers get the support they are entitled to over the summer term and that Year 3 has a more regular class teacher. This is already having a positive impact on the learning and progress of these pupils.

During our visits to lessons we saw pupils engaging better with their learning and some of the systems and strategies you have developed are ensuring that pupils are more motivated to do their best. You have made progress with ensuring there is greater consistency in marking and feedback and pupils are now responding to marking by correcting their work and by taking on the challenges that some teachers are setting.

You and the English and mathematics leads, despite the disruptions to the planned support programme, have made the necessary checks on teaching and learning. This is now more sharply focused on the impact of teaching on the progress pupils are making. This has given you an increasingly accurate picture of teaching over time and helped you to address the needs of individual teachers but not as robustly as you had planned because of staff absence. Work in school and with partner schools has secured the accuracy of assessment and we agreed that assessments in mathematics were accurate except in one class.

During our visits to lessons and the work scrutiny we undertook, we gathered a detailed picture of how the teaching of mathematics is progressing. The progress pupils are making is clearly linked to the quality of teaching they receive and some of the areas for improvement remain. Where teaching is consistently good, pupils are making good progress. We agreed that progress could be outstanding if these teachers checked progress and

subsequently challenged pupils more within the lesson, especially the most able. We also identified several pupils who are clearly gifted mathematicians and agreed that the school needs to take action to ensure the needs of this group are met.

Where the teaching of mathematics requires improvement, teachers are still struggling to pitch teaching and tasks at the right level from the outset. This means some pupils find the work too easy and others too hard. These teachers have a much better understanding of the next steps in learning and are using responsive marking to move pupils on but, this is often at the end of lesson after pupils have spent most of their time doing work they can already do. This slows the pace of learning. Less able pupils are not always given tasks to do that allow them to develop a concrete understanding of new concepts and this limits their progress too. You know this and recognise that, for some teachers, this is a lack of experience and guidance. With timely and regular support, they can improve their practice but, it is vital that this now happens as planned. It is their entitlement.

The governing body has a clear view of where the school is at and is actively monitoring the progress the school is making. This could be sharpened if they had clear and measurable milestones built into the action plan. We spent some time looking at how to improve the action plan to ensure that everyone knows what is expected and precise checks can be made at regular intervals.

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

Support from the local authority is through a consultant headteacher who is providing the support and challenge the school needs. Effective use is being made of local partnerships within the local authority and diocese to support improvements in teaching and leadership. This is providing staff with an opportunity to look at good practice and reflect on their own teaching. It has ensured greater accuracy in assessing pupil progress and has helped leaders to introduce and develop effective systems and procedures to improve teaching and assessment.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority - including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- < Diocese - for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk] - for academies