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Mr David Harrison
Headteacher
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Pickering
Swainsea Lane
Pickering
North Yorkshire
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Dear Mr Harrison

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Pickering, North Yorkshire

Following my visit to your school on 13 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated a range of documentation including the school and local authority improvement plans, information about the pupils' current achievements, minutes of meetings and the school's recently introduced policies on 'teaching for learning' and 'feedback and marking'. In addition, I undertook a tour of the school, had a brief conversation with the staff during the morning break and had a telephone conversation with the director of education for the Middlesbrough diocese.

Context

At the time of the most recent inspection in February 2014, the headteacher at Malton St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School was acting headteacher at St Joseph's. With effect from April 2014, a formal partnership has been established between St Mary's and St Joseph's. A memorandum of agreement resulted in the appointment of the headteacher at St Mary's as the executive headteacher of both schools. The executive headteacher splits his time equally between both schools. The selection process for a newly created deputy headteacher post is underway. A temporary teacher has been appointed to provide additional support for Year 6 pupils. Two support assistants have also been appointed.

Main findings

The executive headteacher has a clear vision and a sound understanding of what needs to be done to bring about improvement. He is capitalising well on the best practice already in place in both partner schools to provide training and coaching activities. A number of new approaches are being introduced to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, marking and feedback. The introduction of certificates to recognise excellent attendance are having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to school and learning. Pupils' attendance continues to improve and currently stands at 96% for the school year to date.

Tracking and assessment systems have been overhauled. The information generated is being used well to monitor pupil performance and ensure individual support is provided swiftly. In Year 6 for example, evidence shows that targeted support provided by the additional teacher is effectively tackling pockets of underachievement and almost a quarter of pupils looks set to achieve their level 6 targets at the end of the current academic year.

The school's improvement plans are suitable for purpose and follow the areas for further improvement identified during the inspection in February 2014. Effective systems, strategies and policies are being put in place to support and sustain improvement over the longer term. However, the headteacher and governors recognise that more time is needed for these to become embedded consistently throughout the school. Similarly, they acknowledge that the school's planning, monitoring and evaluation activities can be sharpened and see this as a future priority.

Governors are being provided with regular and detailed information that enables them to monitor the impact of the actions being taken. The committee structure is being revised and more frequent visits are resulting in a better understanding of what is going on in the school. Governors benefit from their engagement with the 'Pickering schools together' forum and welcome their developing relationship with the governors at St Mary's.

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

Advice, support and additional funding provided by the local authority is helping the headteacher and governors to tackle the key priorities. Specialist advice for literacy and mathematics is helping to develop subject leaders' expertise and skills and providing external checks on the quality of teaching and learning. The relationships growing between St Mary's and other local schools is making a significant contribution to the school's improvement, most notably through the sharing of best practice, professional development opportunities and joint moderation of pupils' work.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ripley

Her Majesty's Inspector