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23 May 2014

Mr John Smith
Headteacher
Our Lady and St Bede Roman Catholic School
Bishopton Road West
Stockton-on-Tees
Cleveland
TS19 0QH

Dear Mr Smith

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Our Lady and St Bede RC School, Stockton-on-Tees

Following my visit to your school on 22 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 and senior leadership team, three members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, a group of pupils, and the Director of Standards, Carmel Education Trust. I reviewed a range of documentation including the school action plan, records of recent pupil progress meetings and departmental reviews, and information about the pupils' current achievements. In addition, I undertook a scrutiny of a small sample of pupils' work in their books and teachers' marking alongside three senior leaders, toured the school with the headteacher and had a brief telephone conversation with the Director of Education, Hexham and Newcastle Diocese.

Context

Since the inspection in February, one teacher has left and two new mathematics teachers have joined the school. A whole school literacy coordinator has been appointed internally. A science teacher has been appointed and will join the school in September 2014. The school is currently working towards converting to an academy as part of the Carmel Education Trust.

Main findings

Senior leaders have a sound understanding of what needs to be done to bring about swift improvement. Middle leaders and teachers are being included in the implementation and review of new initiatives. A number of new approaches have been introduced to improve the quality and consistency of teachers' marking and feedback. The structure of the mathematics department has been revised to ensure a strong focus on pupils sustaining consistently good progress throughout both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

Feedback from pupils indicates that they are positive about the changes that have been implemented. Pupils have a clear understanding of the school's new approach to marking and say they are now being provided with opportunities to correct their work. Similarly, pupils recognise that changes in the mathematics department and opportunities to attend after-school sessions in a range of subjects are beginning to accelerate their learning and progress.

Effective systems and strategies are being put in place to support and sustain improvement over the longer term. Pupils' targets have been revised and expectations about what pupils are able to achieve are rising as a result. Tracking and assessment systems have been overhauled. The information generated is being used increasingly well by senior leaders to monitor pupil performance and ensure individual support is put into place swiftly when needed. Clearer lines of accountability between middle and senior leaders are being established, for example, through the recently implemented departmental and subject reviews and pupil progress meetings. A range of planned staff development and training activities are being carefully balanced alongside increased opportunities to share the good practice that exists within the school and externally. The school action plan is suitable for purpose.

Governors are being provided with more detailed information that enables them to monitor the impact of the actions that senior leaders are taking. Governors demonstrate a clear intent to make a difference to the school through the range of activities they have engaged in an undertaken recently, including meetings with their counterparts at Carmel regarding academy proposals.

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 provided by the local authority is helping senior leaders and governors to identify and tackle priorities, to sharpen plans and refine actions. Local authority reviews of the quality of teaching and learning and pupil tracking systems have recently been planned and are due to commence later in the summer term. Senior leaders and governors are beginning to draw on the support that is available to them through the Carmel Education Trust and are working closely with their peers on the plans to convert to an academy.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ripley

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