

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5307
Email: rachel.evans@tribalgroup.com



1 July 2014

Jack O'Neill
Headteacher
St Vincent de Paul RC Primary School
Morpeth Terrace
London
SW1P 1EP

Dear Mr O'Neill

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Vincent de Paul RC Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1 July 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 April 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 you, other senior leaders, three members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan. I had a telephone conversation with the headteacher of a local outstanding school who is providing support. You gave me a short tour of the school which included a visit to the playground where pupils were taking part in sports day.

Context

Since the inspection, there have been no changes to the school's staffing. One teacher will leave at the end of the summer term. Two teachers have been appointed for September 2014. There will be a small number of changes to middle leadership responsibilities for the start of the new academic year.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have acted quickly to bring about the changes needed. The improvement plan is detailed and addresses the issues from the last inspection. It makes it clear who is responsible for each action. Milestones break down longer-term targets so that leaders and governors can check that progress is being made quickly enough.

Pupils in Key Stage 1 now use exercise books rather than storing their work in folders. As a result, pupils' responses are no longer limited by worksheets; there are now many more opportunities for them to write at length, applying their literacy skills in different subjects. Teachers have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils' writing is now considerably more detailed than before the inspection. They respond well to opportunities to write in subjects other than English. For example, Year 2 pupils wrote detailed accounts of the 'Great Fire of London' in history.

The middle leader with responsibility for English has worked with more-able pupils in Year 2 to increase their rate of progress. This has resulted in a rise in the number of pupils achieving Level 3 in writing. She has also shared her expertise with other teachers. As a result of this support and guidance, the quality of writing has improved throughout Key Stage 1.

To support the focus on improving pupils' writing skills, leaders have reviewed the school's approach to phonics (linking letters and sounds). Training has been provided for all Key Stage 1 staff by staff at a local outstanding school. A consistent approach is now in place for the teaching of phonics in Key Stage 1. Leaders also have clear plans to extend the phonics programme into Key Stage 2 for those pupils who need it. Pupils' writing shows that their spelling is improving.

Leaders have provided training to improve the quality of teachers' marking. The good practice in Key Stage 2 has been adopted in Key Stage 1. As a result, the quality of marking has improved. For example, in Year 2 a more-able pupil was challenged to write in greater depth by including comments about a character's feelings. In mathematics, marking comments often ask pupils to apply their understanding, by trying more advanced calculations.

Expectations of those with subject leader responsibilities have been raised. A robust framework is now in place to support their work and to increase their accountability for pupils' achievement. Middle leaders have begun to work with the headteacher to observe teaching jointly and to evaluate pupils' progress. As a result middle leaders are becoming more confident about making judgements and identifying areas for staff development.

Governors have a clearer understanding of their role. They have begun to ask more searching questions of school leaders about pupils' progress. They have requested additional information about how well pupils are doing and now review the progress of groups of pupils in more detail. Milestones in the action plan are aligned to governing body meetings so that governors are better able to hold leaders to account. Governors are in the process of reviewing the terms of reference of committees so that their work can be more efficient and effective.

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 funded the support of the headteacher of a local outstanding school. She has supported the headteacher in establishing systems which make more effective use of information about pupils' progress. She has also helped to define the role of middle leaders. Teachers from her school have provided phonics training for Key Stage 1 staff. Plans are in place for this support to continue and for longer-term links to be made between leaders of both schools. Middle leaders have begun working with their counterparts in the partner school.

Local authority officers have provided valuable support for action planning and have checked the school's progress since the inspection. A local authority officer has supported Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 staff in making more accurate judgements about standards.

A review of governance is underway, led by a local authority officer. She has visited governing body meetings and provided training for governors in the use of information about pupils' progress. Her advice has enabled governors to hold school leaders more fully to account.

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

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Loukes
Seconded Inspector