

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231

Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566 937

Direct F 01695 729 320

Direct email: jsimmons@cfbt.com



9 September

Mrs Caroline Dunne
Headteacher
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Rochdale
Pot Hall
Wilton Grove
Heywood
Lancashire
OL10 2AA

Dear Mrs Dunne

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

Following my visit to your school on 8 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 May 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:

- amend the section of the action plan linked to 'embedding the role of middle and subject leaders' by identifying clear, simple and effective strategies to enable them to develop their subjects as well as their own expertise and knowledge
- ensure that middle leaders take full responsibility for providing appropriate ideas and resources to improve outcomes for pupils and teachers' confidence in teaching their subject
- refine policy documents to ensure that there is clarity in common approaches to teaching, reading writing, calculation etc. across the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with yourself, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors as well as a group of pupils from Year 6. A meeting was also held with the local authority and diocesan advisers to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection and the level of support being provided. The school's development plan was evaluated. In addition, a learning walk with you focused on the learning environment around the school.

Context

Since the inspection there have been some significant changes to staffing. You have taken up post as substantive headteacher from the beginning of September. In addition, three new teachers have been employed alongside four new teaching assistant appointments. There has also been some restructuring of responsibilities across the school.

Main findings

After a period of transition, the school now has a stable leadership in place and is in a much stronger position to implement change and accelerate improvements over the coming year. Standards have improved although not yet quickly enough. There has been a significant improvement in the phonics screening test, with 90% of pupils meeting the expected standard. Elsewhere most pupils made at least expected progress in their reading, writing and mathematics but there is a need for more pupils to make more than expected progress if the school is to be judged good at a future inspection. Higher ability pupils are not yet challenged sufficiently and boys, on the whole, continue to do less well than the girls, especially in their writing. However, the overall trend is gently upwards.

Strategies are being implemented to improve learning and classroom practice. For example, staff have received comprehensive recent training in how to use quality texts to engage pupils and improve their reading and writing. A new whole school marking strategy has also been introduced and a new reading strategy is currently being implemented. It is much too early to judge the impact of these initiatives but pupils have noticed some positive changes around the school, some of which you initiated in conjunction with the interim headteacher prior to taking up post in September. For example, pupils commented positively about mathematics lessons being more active and enjoyable than previously. They have also noticed physical improvements around the school. These include new direct access doors to classrooms which avoid having to pass through other classrooms and potentially causing disruption to lessons. The boys were also pleased with the new and more hygienic toilet facilities, Pupils interviewed were positive about the up-beat atmosphere around the school.

Senior management responsibilities have undergone re-organisation to enable managers to focus more specifically on improving teaching and raising achievement. Middle leadership is also in the process of being restructured, but this is still at an early stage of development. These impending changes will need to be implemented as quickly as possible to ensure improvements are more consistently evident in all classrooms. There is a clear desire and commitment to making improvements which are secure, sustainable and make a difference to pupils' learning. The school is now well placed to make good progress in the future.

Governors are well informed and pro-active. They are fully committed to ensuring that improvements are fast tracked. Significant re-organisation and training of governors has occurred over the past year. A new working party has been established, in addition to the local authority led challenge meetings, to receive regular updates from yourself and middle leaders about the progress being made. Governors are now fully involved in holding the school to account. They have been fully involved in the recent staff restructuring and are fully supportive of the changes you are making.

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 school has been very well supported by the local authority and the diocese during a very difficult transition period when several interim headteachers have been in post. This was instrumental in ensuring that some element of leadership continuity was maintained until you were able to officially take up your post. The school continues to receive regular monitoring visits to assess the progress being made. There is a commitment to continue these visits until there is clear evidence that the school is making the accelerated progress necessary to become a good school. Support for yourself has been brokered from Holy Family Primary School. The local authority plans to broker additional training and support as required.

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

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

Her Majesty's Inspector