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Spencer Bragg
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Scratton Road
Stanford-le-Hope
SS17 0PA

Dear Mr Bragg

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

Following my visit to your school on 22 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:

- ensure there is a plan which details how teaching and pupils' outcomes will be monitored by leaders in the school
- ensure that there are regular reviews of teaching and learning and that teachers receive the feedback they need to improve the quality of teaching
- ensure the work of teaching assistants in classrooms is evaluated for its impact on improving the progress of pupils including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs
- ensure governors have the training and support they need to rigorously hold the school to account.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you. We toured the classrooms together. I met with four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I looked at documents including the school's improvement plans, achievement data and records of your monitoring activities. I checked the safeguarding procedures for the appointment of new members of staff.

Main findings

Since the section 5 inspection, Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes have improved. The outcomes of the phonics screening checks in Year 1 have also improved and are above average. Year 2 attainment has improved significantly and is above average. Attainment at Key Stage 2 has improved in reading and is well above average. However, Year 6 attainment has not improved in mathematics or writing compared with 2013 outcomes. In the summer 2014 assessments, most pupils made at least the expected progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 and many made better than expected progress.

Classes have been re-organised and teams of teachers have been formed to aid better working together and more opportunities for good teachers to share their practice. These teams have a mix of experienced and less experienced teachers who now have the opportunity to work and plan together. There are credible plans to build the leadership skills of more inexperienced teachers. The school has begun to improve the quality of feedback to pupils through the marking comments in their books.

Work to improve outcomes for the most able pupils is at an early stage. The school has planned training for teachers to help them to provide challenge for pupils more consistently in their lessons.

Overtime the school has built a profile of teaching, which includes the results of lesson observations as well as evaluations of progress in books and achievement data. This is a useful document, however, it does not include all of the monitoring information leaders collect. Leaders have not produced a clear timetable for monitoring activities and since the section 5 inspection, there has not been enough monitoring of teaching to help it improve.

The school improvement plan includes all of the areas for improvement from the section 5 inspection. The headteacher inherited the format of the plan and now needs to adapt it to ensure that it is a working document that is meaningful to leaders and school staff.

The leadership of provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has changed and there is an interim leader on a short-term contract. She has begun to evaluate the work of some of the teaching assistants who support pupils with a statement of special needs but the work of teaching assistants in classrooms

has not yet been evaluated for its impact. The school is in the process of introducing catch-up phonics sessions for older pupils who have gaps in their knowledge of the sounds letters represent.

The governors are growing in confidence and effectiveness but recognise the need for further training to ensure they can monitor and challenge the school rigorously. The local authority is committed to providing further training and support for the governing body . The progress board continues to meet but less frequently now. Governors plan to conduct an audit of their skills and an external review of governance is also planned.

The necessary pre-employment safeguarding checks are completed and recorded diligently.

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 provides support for newly qualified teachers. Some teachers are attending training to become more effective through a local teaching school. The headteacher has access to the local authority's induction programme, which includes some one to one support. The school has local authority improvement partner who visits regularly to support improving leadership.

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

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector