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Mrs Helen Lines
Headteacher
Pope Paul Catholic Primary School
Baker Street
Potters Bar
EN6 2ES

Dear Mrs Lines

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Pope Paul 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 findings of my visit. 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 June 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:

- sharpen the school improvement plan by including quantifiable measures of success for each priority
- establish more positive links with parents and ensure that they are kept fully informed about pupils' progress and attainment.

Evidence

During the visit I held meetings with you and the subject leaders for literacy and numeracy to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I met with seven governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I also spoke with two representatives of the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Westminster. I visited classes to see pupils and staff at work. I also checked a sample of pupils' books and evaluated the school's improvement plan and other documentation.

Context

Since the previous inspection two teachers have left the school. Governors have not been able to recruit permanent replacements so they have appointed two teachers on temporary contracts.

Main findings

The school has responded positively to the findings of the previous inspection. You have worked with the governing body to develop a plan to address the weaknesses that were identified. The plan identifies an appropriate set of actions which the school intends to take in order to address each of the areas that require improvement. Appropriate timescales have been set for senior leaders and governors to review progress. However, not all of the actions have clear success criteria which can be used by leaders to review progress. This means it will be difficult for school leaders, including governors, to evaluate the impact of the school's work.

You have continued to undertake regular lesson observations to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. You have released the deputy headteacher from the responsibility of teaching a class this year. Instead she is working alongside other teachers in lessons, providing good support and challenge, in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. You have also identified a clear role for other subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, through classroom observations and regular scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work. There are signs, in pupils' books, that these changes are already beginning to have a positive impact.

Governors are increasingly well placed to help the school to improve by providing a greater level of challenge and support to school leaders. Governors regularly observe the work of the school at first hand. Through their links with specific year groups and curriculum areas they have developed a better understanding of how the school operates; what it does well and where weaknesses remain. Governors have recently taken action to address the dissatisfaction which was expressed by many parents on Parent View prior to the previous inspection. A meeting with parents was organised to share the plans which school leaders have developed in order to become a good and ultimately outstanding school. During the meeting parents were also provided with the opportunity to raise issues and governors explored how best to develop more effective systems of communication between home and school. You recognise that further work is required to address this perceived weakness.

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 provided regular, well-structured support and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Concerns about the school's performance, during the last academic year, led to a formal review of the school's effectiveness. Following the review, the local authority provided intensive support for school leaders. The local authority now plans to conduct termly reviews of the school's progress against the issues identified at the previous inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector