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Mrs Alison Thornton
Headteacher
St Kentigern's RC Primary School
Bethnall Drive
Fallowfield
Manchester
M14 7ED

Dear Mrs Thornton

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of St Kentigern's RC Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in May 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, subject leaders for English, mathematics and science, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor and representatives of the local authority and diocese. Documents, including the single central record, were scrutinised. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated. I visited classrooms and outdoor play and learning areas accompanied by you.

Context

Since the recent full inspection, 11 teachers have left the school and 10 have been appointed. Of these, six are newly qualified teachers. A deputy headteacher post is vacant. Two governors have resigned and one governor appointed. The senior

leadership team has been reorganised and includes three additional assistant headteachers. An assistant headteacher has been appointed as special educational needs coordinator. The local authority's senior school effectiveness officer who works with the school has changed. Surplus temporary classrooms have been removed from the site and a new foyer has been opened.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders and governors responded quickly to the findings of the inspection. They have worked in partnership with the local authority and diocese to establish new priorities and plans which are starting to be implemented. Despite the work done over the previous year to improve the school in, for example, establishing the new governing body and responding to long-standing concerns and staffing issues, teaching was not good enough to prevent pupils' achievement falling by the end of the year. Leaders have now put in place appropriate steps to ensure that the urgent improvement needed happens rapidly enough. The school faces significant additional challenges because of the number of teachers new to the school or with new responsibilities. You have ensured that the roles of senior and middle leaders are closely defined and, even at this early stage, this has given clarity of purpose and determination to their work.

Senior leaders have set high expectations for the quality of teaching. You visit each classroom at least once a week to check that teaching is being effective. The new arrangements for senior leadership give two assistant headteachers time to monitor its quality and support development. There are early signs that teaching is improving. Teachers are aware of potential weakness in pupils' knowledge and understanding and ensure that they carefully check that any gaps are filled as new work is covered. Teachers are starting to work together to discuss and share effective approaches.

School leaders are aware of the importance of tightly structured arrangements for the induction and further development of the newly qualified teachers and other teachers new to the school. However, there is no coordinated plan for this. Without such a plan there is a risk that the needs of these new members of staff might not be met and the effectiveness of their work reduced.

Governors are continuing to provide robust support and challenge. This is enhanced by their good knowledge of the school and their relevant skills and experience. Governors are willing to invest the time needed to ensure the school rapidly improves, and the curriculum and standards committee meet every half term to check that improvement stays on track. At other times, governors visit the school to focus on specific issues. You ensure that they are involved in important developments, such as the new curriculum and the improving support for students who have special educational needs. The external reviews of governance and of the school's use of the pupil premium required in the inspection report have been

commissioned. The governing body is committed to using the reviews' findings, when available, to help it become even more effective.

The local authority has refocused its work with the school. The local authority had previously brokered a link with a successful local school and a similar link to another school had been organised through the diocese. Consultants had been engaged to support aspects of the school's work. This did not always lead to the desired impact. For example, work to improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs did not lead to the fundamental change needed and pupils' achievement fell. The senior school effectiveness officer is working closely with the diocesan officer to organise links with effective local schools for this school year. A link has already been established to support the work of the new special educational needs coordinator. Care is being taken to ensure that the match between any supporting school and St Kentigern's will secure effective joint working. This has led to a slight delay in confirming the arrangements to support leadership and teaching with another school.

The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan complement each other well and provide a helpful framework for improvement in the school. The statement of action sets out the ways the local authority will support and challenge school leaders and is systematic in its approach to ensuring that improvement is as expected. It has less detail on how it can support the professional development of teachers and lacks an early target for improvement in the quality of teaching. The school's plan gives more detail of the intended actions for the whole school and for separate subjects and other aspects. It could be further sharpened by giving more emphasis to the role of all teachers in ensuring that actions are implemented. In addition, appropriately demanding targets for all groups of students are not specified.

The single central record meets requirements.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Strategic Director of Children's and Commissioning Services for Manchester and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Salford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector