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David Hickey
Executive Headteacher
St Margaret's Catholic Primary
Glossop Road
Glossop
SK13 6JH

Dear Mr Hickey

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

Following my visit to your school on 17 February 2015, 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 September 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held discussions with the executive headteacher and senior leaders, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I visited all classrooms and held discussions with pupils. Also, I visited All Saints Catholic Primary School, which is federated with St Margaret's and has the same governing body and which was inspected simultaneously with St Margaret's. I evaluated the federation development plan, which is the joint development plan for both schools.

Context

The executive headteacher took up post two weeks before the inspections of both schools in September 2014. The schools were formally federated one term before that.

Main findings

I saw evidence during my visit of the progress that has been made in key areas of the schools' work. The pace of progress has been steady, rather than rapid. That is the result in part of the time that has been needed for the governing body to set up structures and ways of working to enable it to carry out its functions effectively in both schools. Those structures and ways of working are now in place. As a result, governors were able to demonstrate a good awareness of the work that has been undertaken at both schools to tackle the areas for improvement from the inspection of St Margaret's Catholic Primary.

You have been working to integrate various aspects of the work of both schools and, particularly, approaches to leadership and management. For example, you have created a single development plan to cover both schools. The plan incorporates the areas for improvement from both inspections and has a number of good features. It is focused well on improving the achievement of the pupils. The plan is helping you to set out a clear ambition and direction for the school. I discussed with you some improvements that could be made to the plan to assist with increasing the rate of progress at both schools.

You have put in place already a new approach to teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make). The pupils told me about the range of opportunities that they are being given to read and it was clear how the schools' work is encouraging their interest in and enjoyment of reading. You have taken some initial steps to improve the quality of teaching of mathematics, providing training and development for all teachers. The teachers are now planning more learning opportunities to develop the pupils' mathematical problem-solving skills. The pupils talked with interest about some of the opportunities that they have been given.

You are making better use of data about the pupils' achievement. That is helping you to identify accurately where improvements are needed. You have linked the use of data with developments to improve the way that the teachers assess the pupils' work. Already, improvements in marking are helping the pupils to understand better how well they are doing and what they need to improve. The pupils told me that, typically, the work provided them with a reasonable level of challenge, though more-able pupils stated that, sometimes, they could do harder work.

You have introduced an appropriate range of activities to check on the quality of the schools' work and the progress being made in implementing planned changes. The activities are providing you with a clear picture of changes that have been made and are enabling you to provide pertinent feedback to the staff, in order to bring about more improvement. Those activities are not currently being carried out with

sufficient frequency to increase the pace of change. This needs to happen, so that the schools can be judged to be good, or better at their next inspections.

You are, sensibly, developing new approaches to subject leadership. Improvements in the effectiveness of subject leadership have been hampered by the small size of both schools. The actions you have taken so far have resulted in more members of staff being involved in work to improve the schools. Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I agreed with you that I would recommend to Ofsted that the schools receive another monitoring visit, to assist in increasing the pace of change.

External support

You have worked well with the diocese and local authority to ensure that the school can get appropriate and well-focussed support to make improvements. The diocese has arranged a link with another, outstanding school. The local authority has provided good support to help in implementing new ways of checking on the progress of the school's work. Support from the local authority for improving the teaching of mathematics has assisted with the improvements in marking. The federation improvement plan is not always specific enough about the support that is available and how exactly it will be used.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss

Her Majesty's Inspector