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Andrew Neenan
Holy Name Catholic Primary School
Cross Lane
Great Barr
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Dear Mr Neenan

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Name Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 April 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 December 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 that success criteria are securely linked to improved pupil outcomes and that these are supported by timely milestones, which are monitored to check the school's progress precisely at regular intervals.
- clarify how actions will be reviewed and evaluated and by whom, including how governors will be involved in this process.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your senior leaders, pupils, the Vice Chair of Governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the

actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A tour of the school was undertaken and pupils' work in mathematics and English was scrutinised.

Context

There have been no major changes to teaching staff since the last inspection.

Main findings

You are taking effective action to move the school forward. School leaders and governors have responded positively to the Ofsted inspection judgement, which you recognise as an accurate reflection of the current position.

The school's improvement plan addresses all areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, through carefully considered actions and detailed success criteria. However, in some cases there needs to be greater clarity about how actions will improve outcomes for pupils and how these will be measured, through milestones, for their impact throughout the cycle of monitoring and review. We agreed that the review process should be refined so that those who are reviewing are not the same people as those implementing an action and that reviewers should include governors and external partners.

Following a long period of turmoil in the school at senior leadership level as well exceptionally high turnover in teaching staff, you have now secured staffing that is much more stable. Consequently, you have been able to embed some of the improvements that were noted as recent developments in the last Ofsted report.

For example, the focus on improving marking is now beginning to have a positive impact. All teachers are now applying the school's marking policy, using gap task marking to ensure that pupils struggling with their work have extra support or practice to help them secure the required skill or understanding. However, the quality of marking remains variable. For instance, some teachers make highly effective use of questions in their feedback, to encourage pupils to respond to comments and to improve their work, whilst others are less successful in doing this so that not all pupils respond appropriately. In some books seen, teachers were diligent about identifying where and how pupils have done well, as well as identifying next steps, but in many books this was not the case. Consequently, there were missed opportunities to ensure that pupils could confidently carry their learning forward.

Overall, whilst teaching is not yet consistently good, there has been improvement in a number of areas. This is because you have set high expectations for the standards of teaching in the school that all staff are now striving to achieve. The impact of this can be seen in the better use of assessment information to plan activities that meet the needs of pupils, so that in many lessons visited during this inspection, different pupils and groups of pupils were presented with tasks that challenged them appropriately. An effective use of questioning to support pupil progress was noted in

a number of lessons, for instance in mathematics session, where pupils were working on SAT-style questions, the teacher supported pupils through probing questions that ensured they were thinking carefully for themselves and required to explain their reasoning. In less successful examples, teachers were too quick to provide answers, when pupils couldn't immediately answer.

In all lessons visited, behaviour was good. Pupils, without exception, were keen to learn and to talk about their learning. This was confirmed by the group of pupils I spoke to separately, all of whom said they enjoyed coming to school because they learned new things every day. They agreed that their learning is very seldom disrupted by poor behaviour and is dealt with very quickly if this occurs. Pupils also confirmed that behaviour at lunchtimes has improved a great deal. They explained that this is because they now have Year 5 Play Leaders who organise and encourage structured games, as well as a Year 6 'special friends system' which buddies them up with Reception children. Year 6 pupils made it very clear that they are proud of this status and feel that they are contributing to the future success of these children at the school.

We discussed the concerns you have about the impact of previously inaccurate assessment, on the measurement of pupil progress at national level. We agreed that the rigorous monitoring of progress and external moderation of assessment would be crucial in ensuring that you are able to show the increased rate of progress that the school's own data suggests is now emerging, particularly in Year 5 and Year 6.

Provision in the Early Years continues to improve, with greater attention now being paid to how initial assessment informs planned provision so that progress towards good levels of development begins from entry to the nursery. Changes made to the leadership of this area have been positive and early information suggests that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development will be significantly higher this year, and likely to be in line with national expectations.

Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and are clear about the actions required to ensure the school moves to good as quickly as possible. They have been fully involved in the improvement plan and describe it as characterised by defined outcomes with regular monitoring. They are keen to be actively involved in the review progress. The committee structure now in place is ensuring that they are better able to challenge and this is supported because they are now getting regular and accurate information from you and your senior leaders.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school has accessed a range of external support through a local teaching school. However, budgetary restraints have now come into play and you are currently seeking alternatives. You are particularly keen to identify an external partner to provide termly review and verification of the school's progress, which we agreed would be an important next step.

You have also received support from the local authority, over and above the core yearly visits. We agreed that it would be helpful if the school works with the local authority to identify where they can provide the required support and where gaps need to be filled from other sources. We also agreed that a clear timetable of provision should be established, linked to the school improvement plan priorities.

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

Yours sincerely

Mel Ford
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- Director of Children's Services for Sandwell
- Diocese