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29 June 2015

Miss Marie Flynn  
Headteacher  
St Paul's Catholic Primary School  
Turner Lane  
Hyde  
Cheshire  
SK14 4AG

Dear Miss Flynn

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Paul's Catholic Primary School, Tameside**

Following my visit to your school on 26 June 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 March 2015. 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 the newly promoted assistant headteachers receive appropriate leadership training that supports them to undertake their role
- continue to raise expectations of presentation across the school
- share good practice so that all teachers have the same high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, a National Leader of Education, two governors, a representative from the local authority and six pupils to discuss the actions taken since the last

inspection. The school improvement plan as well as other documents were scrutinised. I also visited each classroom with you to speak to pupils, look at their books and observe their learning.

## **Context**

Two assistant headteachers have been appointed to cover the upcoming maternity leave of the deputy headteacher.

## **Main findings**

Following the inspection you wasted no time to write a sharply focussed action plan that outlines a clear route map for your journey towards becoming a good school. Milestones are timely and allow the governing body and you to check your progress along the way. Success criteria are measurable and you have set yourself and the school ambitious targets for improvements.

Governors share your enthusiasm for the journey ahead and have confidence in your ability to bring about the required improvements. They have brokered support for you by requesting help from the local authority. As a result, you have been working closely with a National Leader of Education (a local headteacher) since November 2014. She has been able to share good practice from her own school and act as a sounding board for your own ideas for school improvement. Governors have a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Your regular meetings with the Chair as well as his involvement in observing learning walks ensure that governors are able to keep a close check on the impact of your actions.

You have reviewed the monitoring and evaluation cycle so that you and subject leaders are checking on the quality of teaching and achievement of pupils more regularly. Feedback to teachers is clear and relates directly to the impact that their teaching is having on pupils' progress. Where areas for improvement are identified you robustly follow these up with advice, support and further observations to ensure that there is a swift and positive impact on the quality of teaching. You and the governors are taking effective action to tackle any under-performance.

You and the English subject leader have acted swiftly to address the issue, identified during the inspection, that reading books did not match pupils' abilities. You canvassed the opinion of pupils to gauge their views and listened to their suggestions. As a result, a significant investment has been made to purchase a large number of high quality reading books. Pupils say that they 'love the new books' and value the greater independence that they have to choose what they read. Pupils are noticeably more motivated. One pupil told me for example, 'I have never read a book this long before, but I want to try it and be more adventurous with my reading'.

The English subject leader has also had the support of an external consultant to support her to plan further actions to raise standards in writing. Two members of

staff for example, are leading the way and trialling a talk based approach to writing that is showing the early signs of raising standards. As a result of this success you have plans to train all staff in this approach in September.

The mathematics subject leader has also responded with urgency to issues raised in the inspection. She has attended the Ofsted 'Better mathematics' conference and shared relevant information with school staff. Furthermore, an external consultant has recently worked with all teachers to increase their skills to plan and deliver lessons on problem solving and reasoning. Staff have been enthused by this training. This was evident during our learning walk where for example, the most able pupils in the Year 2 class were working logically, collaboratively and enthusiastically through a challenging investigation. Your own evidence also points towards the increased use of open ended questions by teachers to develop pupils' reasoning skills.

Some teachers have grasped the nettle of improvement with more urgency and success than others. In some classes, it is clear that there are very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result some pupils are making very strong progress. In the Year 6 mathematics books for example, pupils are challenged to solve complex algebraic equations and achievement is high. However, in a small number of classes evidence shows that the level of work does still not match some pupils' abilities.

Many teaching staff have accepted the opportunity you have offered them to share good practice and support improvements in each other's teaching through a lesson study model (planning and delivering lessons jointly). They report that this has encouraged professional dialogue and is having a positive impact on improving their own teaching skills; encouraging them to be more adventurous.

There are early signs that teachers are implementing the school marking and feedback policy with greater rigour. Pupils say that some comments and targets set by their teachers are helping them to understand what to do improve their work, particularly where comments focus on success criteria. However, the picture is not yet consistent across the school. In some classes, feedback is too generic and lacks purpose. A consultant with expertise in this area is scheduled to work with teachers in the coming weeks.

Higher expectations by most teachers are resulting in pupils taking greater care with their work and presentation is improving. However, in a small number of classes the over use of worksheets, as well as providing pupils with poor quality workbooks, results in presentation of a poor standard.

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**

You have begun to develop links with other headteachers within the local authority and have undertaken learning walks around other local schools. This has helped you too raise your own expectations of the quality of the learning environment in your own school.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Bell

**Her Majesty's Inspector**