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Mrs Claire Marrin
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Upton
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Dear Mrs Marrin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Upton

Following my visit to your school on 13 December 2017, 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 October 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in October 2016, 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 in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- build upon the effective actions to improve the quality of teaching in school to accelerate the progress that pupils make in writing in key stage 2
- ensure that pupils, including the most able, develop a secure knowledge and understanding of concepts in science.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, your acting deputy headteacher and members of staff. I held meetings with four governors, including the chair, and representatives of the local authority and the Diocese of Shrewsbury to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement and

action plans and visited classrooms to see teachers and pupils at work. I examined pupils' work in books and information about pupils' attendance, attainment and progress. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and considered the responses to the two most recent parental surveys undertaken by leaders.

Context

Since the last inspection, five members of staff have left the school, including the headteacher. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher took up their roles during the summer term 2017. There has been some staff absence. A new pastoral support officer and higher-level teaching assistant have been appointed.

Main findings

Following the last inspection, leaders were slow to implement actions to bring about improvement. However, since you took up the mantle of acting headteacher, you and your acting deputy headteacher have worked tirelessly and effectively to accelerate the progress made by the school to improve. Leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because of their improved monitoring and evaluation. Well-constructed development plans identify the correct improvement priorities.

Leaders' high expectations have been shared with all staff. More effective performance management systems hold teachers and teaching assistants closely to account for the impact of their actions. You do not hesitate to take appropriate action to address any underperformance that you identify.

Leaders have improved the quality of teaching through appropriate training, including giving opportunities for teachers to learn from good practice in other schools. As a result, pupils now make better progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. In 2017 key stage 2 national assessments, pupils' progress in reading, and mathematics was in line with other schools nationally. The progress that pupils made in writing also improved considerably, but remained below the national average. You are not complacent and correctly recognise that progress in reading, mathematics and particularly in writing still require further improvement. You are taking appropriate actions to bring this about.

As a result of your actions, teachers demonstrate greater understanding of the strategies they can use to promote learning. Teachers have heightened their expectations. As a result, pupils benefit from more appropriate levels of challenge and make stronger progress, particularly in mathematics. Pupils in mixed-age classes receive work that is more carefully matched to their levels of abilities because teachers make better use of assessment to inform the planning of activities. Work in books shows that in science pupils frequently undertake practical activities to help promote their learning. However, in science, pupils, including the most able, do not typically receive the level of challenge to develop a secure knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts in sufficient depth.

Leadership of special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has considerably improved since the last inspection. The acting deputy headteacher has taken responsibility for the role of special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). Her careful attention to detail ensures that pupils receive appropriate support and that records are meticulously kept. Her effective monitoring ensures the regular evaluation of the impact of actions and holds teachers and teaching assistants closely to account for the quality of their work. Consequently, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making better progress. Parents of children who have SEN and/or disabilities are better informed about how their children are progressing because of termly meetings to discuss their children's progress and the next steps that are required. As a result, their views of the school, and those of parents in general, have improved to such an extent that some have reversed their decisions to remove their children from the school. Those parents who spoke with me attribute this to the considerable improvement in the leadership of the school.

Governors have ensured that the external review of the use of pupil premium funding has been completed. The outcomes of the review were not positive. However, leaders have taken appropriate action to begin to address the priorities for development that the review identified. Governors have grown in confidence and more strongly challenge senior leaders to ensure that the wise use of additional funding has the desired impact on learning. Refinements to the way teaching assistants are used ensure that pupils benefit from more sharply focused support and make better progress.

School leaders appropriately challenge parents who do not ensure that they get their children to school on time or often enough. Leaders also effectively promote attendance within school using a variety of strategies that celebrate good attendance. Consequently, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, attend more often.

External support

The local authority and diocese have worked closely together to broker support for the school. They monitor the impact of the support they provide carefully. They refine and amend its focus appropriately to ensure that it meets the school's needs. The school has drawn effectively on the support provided.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Shrewsbury, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wirral. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Nixon
Her Majesty's Inspector