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22 March 2018

Mrs Kathryn Vernon  
Headteacher  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
Wheatland Lane  
Wallasey  
Merseyside  
CH44 7ED

Dear Mrs Vernon

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's RC Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that pupils of lower ability get the support they need to learn more effectively in mathematics lessons
- continue to improve rates of attendance, particularly for those pupils who are persistently absent from school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the assistant headteacher, the early years leader and the mathematics coordinator. I also met with a representative of the local authority and a national leader of education to discuss the impact of the external support that the school has received since the previous inspection. I scrutinised the school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation document.

I also looked at information related to pupils' achievement and attendance. I visited each classroom, with you, to observe teaching and learning in mathematics. I scrutinised pupils' mathematics books and spoke with pupils about their work. I met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I also considered the school's procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work at the school and records of these checks on the single central record.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, a new assistant headteacher has been appointed. You have also reorganised the staffing structure, and the Year 6 class is currently taught by two teachers.

## **Main findings**

Two main areas for development were identified at the previous inspection: raising achievement in mathematics and improving attendance. Your plans for improvement address these areas well, and also cover other aspects of the school's work which you have rightly identified as in need of development. Regular scrutiny of the progress being made, against milestones identified in your improvement plan, is helping you and other school leaders to closely monitor the impact of the work.

Since the previous inspection, you have introduced a new whole-school approach to the teaching of mathematics. You have focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and have changed the structure and content of mathematics lessons significantly. Pupils are now regularly challenged to think hard and use their skills and knowledge to solve mathematical problems. This is having a positive impact on pupils' ability to reason, and these positive changes are helping to improve rates of pupils' progress. In the lessons that we visited, and in the books we reviewed, pupils showed very good attitudes to learning. In one of the Year 6 classes, a pupil was demonstrating how to change fractions to decimals and percentages. Other pupils listened intently before carrying on with their own calculations, showing great accuracy in the process. Improvements to the teaching of this subject are reflected in the quality of work that I saw in pupils' books. However, there are some occasions when lower-ability pupils are not able to fully engage with the planned activities in lessons and their progress is not as strong as a result.

You have a new assessment system in place which is helping to provide a clear overview of pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. You meet regularly with teachers to check on the progress of all pupils, and different groups of pupils, in order to identify strengths in teaching and any pupils at risk of underperformance. Your assessment data and the work seen in pupils' books, show that pupils are making much better progress this year and that many Year 6 pupils are already meeting end-of-year expectations.

You have also had success in reducing absence. Pupils' attendance has been below the national average for the past two years, as has the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school. You have implemented a range of strategies to address this issue. These include various awards, including recognition of good attendance at an assembly led by the Mayor of Wirral. You are now also taking stronger action when parents regularly fail to send their children to school. Attendance for the large majority of pupils has improved this year and is currently just below the national average. However, you recognise that further work is required with families of a small group of pupils who account for a significant proportion of absence.

Governors are committed to their work and continue to provide good levels of support to the school. They have a good understanding of the school's context and regularly receive comprehensive reports about pupils' progress and attendance. They use this information well to ask school leaders challenging questions about the impact of the school's work.

### **External support**

The school is drawing effectively on a wide range of external support. A national leader of education is working with you, and has helped the school to develop and improve the systems used for monitoring pupils' progress. Teachers have been provided with specialist training to support developments in mathematics. A consultant has worked alongside the mathematics team to develop the new curriculum, as well as to improve the systems for scrutinising pupils' work and observing teaching. This support has helped to accelerate the improvements that have been made in mathematics over the past twelve months. You and other school leaders also recognise that further developments are needed in other subject areas. Training and support have been provided for staff, aimed at improving writing and the teaching of reading. The local authority is closely monitoring the school's progress and the impact of the external support that is being 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

Paul Tomkow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**