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Mrs Louise Pink
Headteacher
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Green Lane
Rawmarsh
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S62 6JY

Dear Mrs Pink

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

Following my visit to your school on 12 November 2014, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 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 additional support is provided for all disadvantaged pupils that make slower progress, so that gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding are quickly addressed
- increase the proportion of pupils that make good progress in writing by providing more frequent engaging opportunities for pupils to write at length.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. We jointly undertook a number of lesson observations and I scrutinised pupils' work. I also evaluated the school's plans for improvement and took account of self evaluation records and the minutes of governing body meetings.

Context

Since the last inspection three new members of staff have joined the school, one of which is a member of the senior leadership team. Newly qualified teachers are teaching in Years 1 and 3. Some teachers are teaching different year groups to last year. An external review of governance has been completed.

Main findings

You have acted quickly to address the priorities identified in the first monitoring visit and the school is now on course to become a good school. The school's plans for improvement now set out what actions will be taken across the whole of this academic year and there are suitable targets and milestones in place to allow senior leaders and governors to check on the school's progress. You have also established detailed plans for the professional development of staff and have produced a calendar setting out when checks on the quality of teaching will be made. Together, these plans are providing a much clearer sense of direction for everyone in the school.

You have also provided all teachers with a set of non-negotiable expectations for lesson planning, the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, homework and presentation. Your checks on the quality of teaching show this approach is increasing levels of consistency and, although some teaching still requires improvement, the quality of teaching overall is improving. In the lessons we observed, it was clear that teachers are consistently sharing learning objectives and providing success criteria that help pupils evaluate the quality of their work. Pupils are engaged by the activities, particularly where texts are challenging and engage their interest and curiosity. They behave well and work effectively with one another to develop their ideas. However, for this stage of the term there is little work in books and the quality of handwriting and presentation is still inconsistent. Teaching assistants are well directed and work effectively with pupils both during lessons and when supporting small groups or individuals outside of the classroom.

Achievement across the school is improving. Results from Key Stage 2 tests last summer showed all pupils made at least expected progress in reading and writing, and most pupils made expected progress in mathematics. The proportion of pupils that made more than expected progress increased in reading and mathematics, but not enough pupils made good progress in writing. At Key Stage 1, standards

attained in reading, writing and mathematics remain in line with that seen nationally, with more pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics. Despite the good progress of many disadvantaged pupils, their attainment was well below that of their peers at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. In order to support your efforts to address areas of underperformance, the local authority has funded an additional teacher who is currently providing support for identified pupils in Years 5 and 6. In addition, you are focusing on improving the quality of handwriting and staff have recently received some professional development in this area.

Since my last visit, the governing body has established a 'getting to good' working party with a clear remit for checking the impact of the school's plans for improvement and scrutinising pupil progress. The group has already met twice. Governors now receive good quality information about the progress pupils are making and about the quality of teaching. As a result, areas where pupil progress is slower are now quickly identified and challenged. Governors are better informed about the work of the school because they have increased the number of visits they make. For example, governors attended staff training days in September and recently visited the school to look at the impact of work to improve the effectiveness of teaching assistants.

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

External support

The local authority continues to provide effective support and challenge to the school. A representative of the local authority has worked with governors to ensure the 'getting to good' working party provides effective scrutiny. He has also secured the ongoing support of Harlaxton Church of England Primary School for the rest of this academic year and produced an action-plan to ensure this work is focused appropriately. Some further support has been brokered from other schools to meet specific needs. You are now managing external support more effectively and ensuring it contributes to the school's most pressing priorities. The external review of governance, commissioned by the school prior to the last inspection, has been completed. As a result governors are now working more strategically and hold senior leaders to account more robustly.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Rotherham

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector