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Mrs Helen McLaughlin  
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
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South Yorkshire  
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Dear Mrs McLaughlin

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

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 July 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 July 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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

The school should take further action to:

- improve the consistency of teaching and learning particularly in key stage 1 by continuing to rigorously monitor the quality of teaching overall and by holding teachers to account for progress pupils make over time
- ensure that the most able pupils are set work that challenges them sufficiently so that they make the progress of which they are capable
- increase the levels of support and challenge offered by governors to senior

leaders in order to accelerate school improvement.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher and assistant headteacher, a member of the governing body, two middle leaders and a representative from the diocese. Telephone conversations were held with a representative of the local authority and the deputy chair of governors to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A learning walk was carried out with senior leaders and informal conversations were undertaken with several groups of pupils and two lunchtime supervisors. A work scrutiny of books belonging to disadvantaged pupils was undertaken with senior leaders. A range of documents were scrutinised, including the review of pupil premium spending and the records of monitoring visits carried out by the local authority.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has resigned. Several members of staff have also left. Currently, the school is being led and managed by an executive headteacher and an assistant headteacher. The executive headteacher, who is currently the headteacher of Our Lady and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Wath, is also a national leader of education.

## **Main findings**

You and the assistant headteacher have quickly developed a strong working partnership which enables you to effectively carry out your role as the head of two schools. Since taking up your current post as executive headteacher in September 2017, you have brought about improvement at a fast pace. Your very clear vision for the future is now shared with staff who are responding to your high expectations with enthusiasm.

Your initial priority to raise the quality of teaching and learning has already seen pupils' attainment rise. Strategies such as reducing the amount of time pupils spend working outside the classroom have increased the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and their peers. You and the assistant headteacher have recognised that there is still much to do in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning to become consistently good. However, it is clear from your school improvement plan that you have mapped out a clear pathway.

The curriculum is now more diverse and engaging. Pupils who were spoken to are

enjoying subjects such as art, geography and history. Staff and pupils are looking forward to the further changes to the curriculum planned for January.

A close working partnership is developing between the two schools you lead and manage. Staff spoke positively about the support they had received from teachers from Our Lady and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (in Wath), and say this partnership has increased their confidence and skills.

You have quickly and effectively introduced a system to measure staff performance which links closely with the school's improvement. This, coupled with a more effective monitoring system, has increased the levels of accountability of staff performance and has contributed directly to improvement overall. However, the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in key stage 1, remains inconsistent. As a result, pupils make less progress where the quality of teaching and learning is less strong. You and the assistant headteacher recognise this and systems are in place to bring about further improvement. However, currently, it is too soon to measure the impact of these changes.

Overall, school data shows that outcomes for pupils are improving across the school, particularly in key stage 2. Work in books confirms this strong progress. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils has also improved and differences between this group and others nationally are beginning to diminish. However, the progress made by the most able pupils remains slower than it should be. This is because teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what this group of pupils can attain and work set is often insufficiently challenging.

Pupils' behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. Staff are now more effective at reducing low level disruption both inside and outside the classroom. Lunchtime supervisors report fewer incidents in the playground and their growing confidence to intervene at an earlier point has reduced the number of recorded incidents. The role played by pupil sports ambassadors in engaging pupils in games at lunchtime has also reduced incidents overall.

The governing body does not yet offer sufficient challenge to senior leaders. Governors, spoken to during the inspection, felt that some improvements had been made to the way in which the governing body supports and challenges senior leaders. For example, in the recent past, governors relied too heavily on feedback from the headteacher because they lacked a fundamental understanding of how to analyse school data. Recent minutes of meetings show that although there has been some improvement, it is clear that governors are still not offering current senior leaders sufficient support and challenge to bring about the necessary improvements to the school. As a result of this underperformance, an external review of governance is required.

## **External support**

The newly appointed executive headteacher is a national leader of education. She is playing a pivotal role in bringing about the necessary improvement to the school. Direct support from staff and leaders in Our Lady and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (in Wath) has enabled staff to observe strong practice and to learn from an outstanding setting. The local authority school improvement team also visits regularly and is monitoring the school's progress. Further support and monitoring are also provided by the director for education for the diocese.

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

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas

**Her Majesty's Inspector**