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Mrs Clinton
St Patrick's RC Primary School
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Dear Mrs Clinton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Patrick's RC Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 February 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 March 2016. 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 in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that development plans have specific, clear and measurable outcomes so that governors and leaders can evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken
- improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils
- target the most able pupils, and the most able disadvantaged pupils, to help them make accelerated progress so they can achieve the highest standards.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, pupils, the governing body and representatives of the local authority and Diocese to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans and subject leaders' action plans were evaluated. Other inspection activities included observing pupils' learning jointly with senior leaders, analysing pupils' written work and scrutinising school documentation, for example the outcomes of monitoring activities and the impact of performance management on teaching.

Context

Since the last inspection, there has been a large change in staffing. A number of teachers have been appointed. Governors have reconstituted to form an executive core group to oversee the work of St Patrick's and St Edmund's RC primary schools as part of a federation.

Main findings

You have effectively tackled the weakest teaching in the school and managed well the numerous changes to the teaching staff to ensure that teaching and learning are improving. This has particularly been the case since September 2016 when the school established a stable complement of teaching staff. The formation of a very strong working relationship with your highly effective acting deputy headteacher means that senior leaders have brought stability and ambition to the school.

The expectations for staff and pupils have been raised and this is starting to show in the work pupils are producing. Staff are using pupils' performance information to inform their teaching. However, due to the legacy of poor teaching, there are gaps in some pupils' learning, which means pupils are only just catching up. It will take more time before truly ambitious targets can be set for some pupils, especially the most able. Pupils are making progress to cover lost ground and teachers are using assessment information appropriately to plan their lessons. However, the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils are not making the accelerated progress to achieve the standard of which they are capable.

A systematic approach to teaching phonics in the early years and in Years 1 and 2 is improving pupils' ability to read. The organisation of this has been successful in ensuring that gaps in learning are being addressed. From the teaching sessions we observed and the work in pupils' books, writing is improving. Pupils in the early years are blending sounds to write words and pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 make good progress in their written work. This was an area for improvement identified at the last inspection.

The behaviour of pupils has improved significantly. Pupils are aware that permanent exclusions have been used to tackle some of the most extreme behaviour within school. As a result, they report feeling safer than in the past. In classrooms, pupils

are engaged and focused. They work well together and pupils agree that instances of disruptive behaviour are now rare. They also agree that bullying at the school has been eradicated thanks to the school's new behaviour policy.

Measures are now in place to tackle pupils' absence, although their impact is not evident. The improvement of attendance remains a key area for development.

Governors have acted quickly upon the findings from the reviews of governance and of the use of pupil premium funding. They are starting to ask probing questions, particularly in response to the use of the pupil premium funding and its impact on outcomes for pupils. Development plans identify the correct actions needed to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Nevertheless, they do not identify specific, measurable targets so that governors can fully evaluate the success of these actions. Governors and school leaders are aware that these substantial improvements will take time to be truly embedded due to the culture of low expectations that existed in the school prior to your appointment in September 2015.

You are holding staff to account for the progress pupils make which has sharpened staff's awareness of pupils' different learning needs.

Subject leadership is at an early stage of development overall. Nonetheless, the English and mathematics leaders plus the special educational needs coordinator have a good grasp of their areas and the actions they need to take to secure further improvement.

External support

The school is drawing on a range of external support, some brokered by the local authority which has established strong links with other schools as well as providing accurate quality assurance advice. Other support has been introduced from the federation arrangements, where staff work together across the two schools. The positive impact of this support can be seen in the quality of teaching and learning, which is improving steadily. Support has been provided for governors from the local authority. The Diocese has actively supported the school through its federation arrangements.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector