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Mrs Rachael Tyler
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Tyler

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

Following my visit to your school on 17 May 2018, 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 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:

- improve the coordination of provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
- raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils
- identify precise targets for improving attainment and progress, as well as interim goals to measure how well the school is progressing towards those targets.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, middle leaders, the governing body and representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement and action plans were evaluated. Visits were made to classrooms to observe teaching and learning, and a range of books were examined, as well as displays of pupils' work around the building. A meeting was also held with a random sample of pupils from Years 3 to 6 to gain their views on the school.

Context

Since the last inspection, the school's senior leadership team has been reorganised so that it now consists of you, the deputy headteacher and the assessment leader. Following a review, staffing has been reduced by the equivalent of 1.6 full-time teachers. The role of coordinator for special educational needs (SEN) provision is in the process of being reassigned.

Main findings

The school has put a considerable focus on improving writing and providing pupils with opportunities for extended writing. Amendments to the timetable and to the programme of work mean that pupils now spend more time on drafting, redrafting and refining specific pieces of work. The impact of this is very evident in pupils' books, particularly at key stage 2. There, pupils of varying abilities show growing confidence in using increasingly complex vocabulary and grammatical structures to produce vivid, interesting and extended pieces of writing. They have clearly made good progress over time.

Staff have put considerable energy into extending the range of opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of reasoning and problem-solving in mathematics. In the mathematics lessons visited, pupils were presented with a range of challenges. Although some could solve a problem very quickly, the teachers were not content to accept their answers until they could give clear reasons for their conclusions.

Since the last inspection, leaders have introduced rigorous systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. These include frequent visits to classrooms, detailed scrutiny of work in books and regular reviews of each pupil's performance. As a result, the senior leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning in the school. They are making good use of this information to refine the strategies for bringing about further improvement. The training for staff focuses increasingly on the particular needs of individual teachers, who are given specific targets and timescales for improvement.

Middle leaders are playing an increasing role in this monitoring process. They have received a considerable amount of training to develop their generic skills as leaders

as well as their knowledge and expertise in specific subjects. They are clearly developing the confidence and skills to play a crucial role in bringing about improvements in the school.

Like the middle leaders, the governors have also undertaken a variety of training since the last inspection. As a result, they are now far better equipped to analyse data, to question teachers and pupils about their work, and to hold leaders to account.

The pupils who spoke to the inspector were very positive about the school, particularly the weekly mathematics competitions for pupils, parents and carers and the rewards they receive for attending regularly. Attendance is now above average and persistent absence has reduced to be in line with the picture across the country.

The area where the school has made least progress since the last inspection is in the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The school has conducted a thorough review of the SEN register to ensure that it contains only those pupils who should be on it. Leaders recognise that there is still a need to improve the coordination of provision in this area.

The school's self-evaluation is succinct, focused and accurate. It provides a clear picture of the improvements made to date and what further actions need to be taken to ensure that the school is good.

The school development plan identifies clear priorities for improvement which relate closely, but not exclusively, to the recommendations made in the previous inspection report. Under each priority, it identifies specific and appropriate actions to be taken, making it clear who will implement them and check on their effectiveness. A weakness of the development plan is that it does not include quantifiable targets for improvement. It refers to raising attainment but does not indicate precisely what proportions of pupils are to reach or exceed the expected standards in each subject by the end of each year. It also lacks interim goals to measure how well the school is progressing towards its targets.

Following the last inspection, the school commissioned the local authority to conduct a review of its use of the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. This review was begun in October 2017 and a final report is due in June of this year. The interim report indicates that the school is directing the additional expenditure appropriately. Leaders have conducted a rigorous review of the way that the funding was used last year and have dispensed with the aspects of provision that had too little impact. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils has increased over the last two years. However, their attainment is still too low.

External support

The school is making good and judicious use of the support it receives from a number of sources. These include the local authority, the archdiocese, an early years support network and an external school improvement service. The senior leaders have been careful to ensure coherence in the way that all these resources are used, so that staff are not swamped by advice and help. They have also evaluated the work of each provider and have not been afraid to stop using a service when it is not making enough impact.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh
Her Majesty's Inspector