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Ms Margaret Kolanowska
St Gregory's Catholic Primary School
Woodfield Road
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Dear Ms Kolanowska

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

Following my visit to your school on 15 May 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 June 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher. You both accompanied me on a learning walk when we visited all classes. I also met with other school leaders and with members of the governing body. I met with a group of pupils and held informal conversations with staff and pupils as I toured the school. I evaluated a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the external review of governance, minutes of governors' meetings, records of pupils' attainment review meetings, and the school's survey of parents' views.

Context

You took up your post as headteacher in September 2016. During this academic year, there have been some staff changes, with new teachers starting in Year 4, Year 2, Year 1 and Reception. The deputy headteacher has taken on the responsibilities of the special educational needs coordinator to cover maternity leave. You have appointed a part-time member of staff to support her with this. You have also appointed a member of staff with responsibility for most-able pupils. You have recruited three teachers to start in September 2017 and need to fill three further vacancies.

Main findings

Leaders have acted swiftly to address areas for improvement from the last inspection report.

You have set high standards so that pupils work in resourceful and stimulating classrooms, including displays celebrating their achievements, exemplar work modelled by their teachers and a range of helpful information to draw upon if pupils get stuck.

You have introduced a range of effective initiatives to ensure that all leaders and their teams check regularly on the progress pupils are making. This means that teachers promptly identify when individuals and groups are underachieving so that pupils receive the help they need to improve.

You have appointed two assessment leaders who have played a crucial role in developing new systems to track pupils' progress. They carry out a clear and comprehensive analysis of assessment information, which teachers are able to apply effectively to their planning for the needs of pupils. Leaders use this information to identify where improvements are needed, both in planning the right interventions for pupils who are falling behind, as well as to identify training needs across the staff team.

You have revised the structure of pupil progress meetings. These involve senior leaders and individual teachers reviewing meticulously the progress of pupils in each class. This ensures that teachers and leaders know each pupil well and agree specific actions to help any pupil who is not making progress as quickly as you expect. Leaders regularly check pupils' progress in between the more formal termly meetings and make changes to the interventions as needed. You are also reviewing appropriately how well different types of additional support for pupils work, so that you make the best use of the most effective interventions. You are sensibly introducing half-termly pupil progress reviews for the next academic year.

Leaders have raised expectations about how effectively teachers challenge their pupils to deepen their thinking and make progress as quickly as they can. Your introduction of the three-tier challenge is a routine feature of most lessons, with pupils rapidly becoming familiar with and appreciating their teachers' expectations that they attempt more complex tasks to stretch themselves. Leaders are aware of the need to ensure that the hardest tasks set are sufficiently challenging for most-able pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils' work in their books and my conversations with them indicate that pupils sometimes find tasks too easy, including the most difficult challenges. This is especially the case in mathematics, and also, pupils say, in foundation subjects.

You have provided middle leaders with valuable leadership training and opportunities to develop their skills this academic year. They are more accountable for the performance of their teams, and, in turn, are better placed because of their training to hold individual teachers to account for the quality of their work. You have established a monitoring cycle that ensures that checks are made that teachers act on leaders' feedback, with support as needed, so that improvements are made.

An impact of your revised monitoring systems is seen in middle leaders' regular review of pupils' books. Middle leaders' feedback to teachers has contributed substantially to improvements in the quality of assessment of pupils' work in their books across all year groups. Pupils know what is expected of them. They are very clear how they have improved their work because of the feedback they have received from their teachers. Now the scheme is embedded, you are refining it further to ensure that there is a consistency in the level at which pupils respond as productively as teachers intend. Middle leaders are also rightly focusing on improving the quality of teachers' developmental feedback to extend pupils' learning.

Governors have responded well to the recommendations of the external review of governance, commissioned after the last inspection. They have ensured that they know the school better. They are clear on the strengths and the key areas for improvement for the school and follow these up appropriately to evaluate the impact of actions taken by school leaders. The restructuring of governors' committees and revised schedule for their meetings facilitate more efficient communications across the full governing body. They have embarked on training so that they are well placed to interpret information provided by leaders to inform their discussions. Governors are better prepared so they ask the right questions of leaders. Governors use school visits well, including meetings with staff and pupils, to focus on aspects such as provision for the most able, and safeguarding. They are thoughtfully recruiting new members of the governing body to fill any gaps in their expertise.

External support

The school gains much from its work with the local authority, including visits from an adviser and by attending 'securing good' meetings. In addition, you carry out valuable collaborative work with the West London Teaching Alliance and the deanery schools, focusing on moderation, leadership development and sharing good practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser
Her Majesty's Inspector