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Mrs Rosemary Hince
St Joseph's RC Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hince

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

Following my visit to your school on 5 December 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help that you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken 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 recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to ensure that:

- across all curriculum areas, subject leaders have in place an ambitious, well-designed curriculum that is coherently planned and sequenced
- the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are being met quickly, so that they develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to be successful learners.

Evidence

During my visit I met with you, the deputy headteacher, a group of subject leaders and the member of staff who is responsible for maintaining the safeguarding checks on staff. I met with two members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I met with a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions

taken since the last inspection and the level of support provided. She also represented the Diocese of Salford. I examined a variety of documentation, including: the school improvement plan; minutes of governing body meetings; curriculum plans; and documents connected with safeguarding. You and I carried out a series of joint visits to classrooms to look at the curriculum in phonics, English and mathematics. I talked informally with pupils during the school day.

Context

You were appointed to the role of headteacher in September 2018, shortly after the last inspection. You have appointed a permanent teacher to replace the one who has left. This person has also just recently taken up the role of special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). Three new members of the governing body have been appointed following a recent audit of skills.

Main findings

You, and other leaders, have drawn up a suitable plan of action to address the areas for improvement that inspectors identified at the previous inspection. The improvement plan demonstrates high expectations, is sufficiently detailed, and you regularly evaluate what you have achieved. There is clear evidence that this plan is helping to bring about the changes required to improve the quality of education for the pupils at St Joseph's RC Primary School.

When you joined the school in September 2018, you uncovered a number of other areas that needed urgent improvement, alongside the ones identified at the previous inspection. You have been very effective in identifying the additional issues that are preventing the school's pupils from receiving a good quality of education. You have put actions in place to address these additional barriers. The decisiveness and effectiveness of the actions you have taken so far, have given the school a firm base on which to ensure the success of future improvements.

The school's assessment system was one such barrier pupils' learning that you and the inspection team identified as requiring improvement. You recognised that teachers were using inconsistent and ineffective assessment systems to measure how much knowledge pupils had learned. You have wasted no time in addressing this issue. Effective ways of assessing pupils' learning have now been put in place. Assessment now provides useful information to you and other leaders. It helps you to gain a thorough understanding of how successfully pupils are gaining the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding across subjects. Teachers now use assessment more effectively. They are better at analysing what pupils can do and where the gaps in learning are. They plan activities to match more closely pupils' needs and address any misconceptions that they may have.

As well as improving assessment systems, you, and your deputy headteacher, have developed appropriate ways to check that staff are implementing the curriculum

effectively. For example, you have put in place regular opportunities to visit lessons and look at pupils' work. You provide staff with regular feedback so that they can develop their practice. This has helped to ensure that there is a growing consistency of approach to delivering the curriculum across the school.

Subject leaders are also enthusiastic about their curriculum areas of responsibility. They are beginning to explore how they can develop their subject area in much more depth. This is so that the curriculum, right across the school, is equally ambitious and coherently planned and sequenced. You are aware that the role of subject leaders is still underdeveloped. However, you have secured some specialist training for them. This is due to start in January 2020.

You have reviewed and reduced the large number of pupils that were on the special educational needs and/or disabilities register. This work has helped you and your staff to have a more accurate view about how well pupils, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, are achieving across the curriculum. It has also allowed you to ensure more bespoke support for pupils with SEND. You now need to build on this work to ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of all pupils with SEND.

You have implemented a new mathematics curriculum and a new approach to teaching the subject. This has been effective to date. The mathematics curriculum is better organised. It is much clearer to teachers in terms of what pupils need to learn and in what order. You continue to ensure that there are strategies in place to help pupils remember what they have been taught. You also provide them with more opportunities to explain their learning and to practise their reasoning and problem-solving skills. Teachers are more confident in the subject because of the expert training they have been offered.

Since the previous inspection, reading has been a priority for the school and particularly the development of early reading and phonics. You have established a systematic approach to teaching phonics from Nursery through to Year 2. This programme is starting to contribute to the improvement to pupils' fluency in reading. There was a significant improvement in the number of pupils passing the phonics screening check by the end of Year 1 in 2019.

You are also focusing on developing a progressive and sequential approach to writing. You are also linking reading texts to writing to help stimulate pupils' ideas. For example, in Year 6 pupils used the theme of the First World War and their knowledge of 'War Horse' by Michael Morpurgo to write an account of what it must have been like to have been a soldier at that time. Pupils are becoming increasingly confident writers. I saw some emerging examples of this in science and history books.

There have been some improvements to pupils' reading, comprehension and grammar, punctuation and spelling. You have put in place programmes to develop

these skills across the school. There is some evidence that this new way of working is becoming more consistent. The examples of work that I saw indicated that there is now a more coherent and sequenced approach to building pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding over time. However, this development is still new and there is more work to be done.

The governing body has greatly improved since the previous inspection. A review of governance in the school has resulted in new governors being appointed. Governors are now confident to hold you and your leaders more effectively to account. Evidence from discussions with members of the governing body, and from minutes of governing body meetings, shows that they ask you challenging questions about a wide range of issues. These include how well the curriculum is helping pupils to learn and how well pupils are achieving. Governors are clear about the school's priorities and have ensured prompt actions to bring about the improvements that have taken place to date.

Safeguarding is effective. The school's policy is up to date. The required checks on staff are carried out and recorded properly on the school's central record. You are vigilant about the safeguarding of pupils and are quick to support pupils and families when they need it. The pupils with whom I spoke said that they feel safe in school. They also said that they feel confident that adults will deal with any worries that they may have.

External support

The local authority has provided effective and well-tailored support. This has included: arranging the auditing of governance in school; supporting governors at meetings; and securing the support of a subject specialist consultant in English. You have just secured further support from a local teaching school to develop the curriculum further. You are making the most of all the support available. You, and your leadership team, say that you have found the advice and opportunity to have a sounding board for your ideas and developments invaluable. Regular meetings with a local authority representative are helpful in identifying the next steps. They also ensure that you receive the right support at the right time. The diocese has been available for advice and guidance, as required.

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 Salford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Eastwood
Her Majesty's Inspector