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Mrs Rachel Davidson
Headteacher
Holy Family Catholic Primary School
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Dear Mrs Davidson

Special measures monitoring inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 April and 1 May 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in April 2018.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

John Donald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in April 2018.

- Urgently strengthen leadership capacity by:
 - ensuring that all leaders and governors have the necessary support, skills and attitudes to enable them to carry out their specific roles
 - ensuring that leaders and governors develop clear plans for improvement that identify barriers to pupils' learning, the intended impact of any actions and how they will monitor and evaluate the impact of their actions
 - developing the role of governors and leaders across the school so that they are fully able to support the headteacher in bringing about significant and rapid improvement
 - ensuring that the pupil premium funding is used effectively to help disadvantaged pupils to achieve well
 - ensuring that all leaders and governors are held to account in their respective roles.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers make effective use of what they know about pupils' abilities and interests so that teachers can:
 - plan tasks that help pupils to make rapid progress across a range of subjects and especially in mathematics
 - plan activities that engage and motivate pupils in different subjects.
- Significantly improve outcomes for all pupils, across the curriculum, by ensuring that:
 - all staff demonstrate high levels of aspiration for their own performance and that of the pupils
 - teachers challenge pupils so that their rates of progress increase and they have the necessary skills to achieve well in different subjects
 - the activities planned to support disadvantaged pupils or other pupils who need support are based on reducing their specific barriers to learning
 - the teaching of phonics is better matched to pupils' needs so that a greater proportion reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - all pupils, but particularly disadvantaged pupils and other identified groups, attend school regularly
 - teachers and leaders follow the school's policy for managing behaviour and insist that pupils behave well in lessons and engage in their learning.

■ Build on recent improvements in the early years so that:

- a greater proportion of children have the skills and knowledge to make a successful start when they enter Year 1
- the quality of the outdoor provision improves so that it meets children’s learning needs more effectively.

A review of the spending of the pupil premium should be undertaken to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are given the support that they need to achieve as well as they can.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 30 April to 1 May 2019

Evidence

The inspector observed teaching and learning in all year groups jointly with the headteacher. He spoke to parents and carers as they brought their children to school. He also met with a group of pupils from key stage 2 to discuss their learning and share examples of their work in English, mathematics and science. The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the associate deputy headteacher. He met with the leaders of English, mathematics, assessment, special educational needs and the early years. The inspector also met with a group of five teachers and with the school's pastoral leader. The inspector met with two representatives of the local authority, as well as a representative of the archdiocese. The inspector also met with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

The inspector scrutinised a wide range of school documentation. He examined the single central safeguarding register, information in relation to pupils' performance and examples of leaders' checks on the quality of pupils' work. He evaluated the effectiveness of the school's improvement plans. Along with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, the inspector scrutinised samples of work from pupils in key stages 1 and 2.

Context

Since the previous inspection, an associate deputy headteacher has joined the senior leadership team from a neighbouring school. This temporary role has been created to add strength to the leadership team and to help bring about improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Two members of the governing body have left their posts and two new members have been appointed. Three teachers have left the school since the previous inspection and four new teachers have been appointed.

The school was issued with an academy order. However, there are no plans in place for Holy Family to become an academy in the near future.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have proactively engaged with the support that has been offered from Liverpool local authority and the Archdiocese of Liverpool to ensure that this school continues to improve. Records of their visits indicate that the school is taking effective steps to improve. Improvements in the early years and increasing consistency in the quality of teaching and learning are evident across the school. The archdiocese and local authority have provided the support of an associate deputy headteacher to add needed capacity to the senior leadership team.

School leaders have created a development plan to bring about improvements. This plan indicates the many barriers to learning the pupils have. It is, however, not always clear how the impact of leaders' actions are evaluated as they are discussed in various committee meetings and evidence is collated over several documents. This does not help leaders and governors have a succinct picture of improvements.

Leaders have put in place systems to better hold teachers to account for performance. Leaders are now more knowledgeable about where strengths and weaknesses in teaching are and, as a result, they now beginning to tailor support more effectively. Staff have access to a much wider range of professional development training opportunities.

School leaders have worked effectively to ensure that parents are kept informed about the progress the school is making to improve. Most parents are positive in their views of the school. They say that the school is slowly improving. They note that leaders are very approachable. They are, however, concerned that there has been a high turnover of staff. Parents are anxious for this to become more stable in the future.

Leaders have remained vigilant in their safeguarding responsibilities. They have ensured that all staff have received appropriate basic awareness of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty training.

Leaders have been tardy in their response to commission a review of their pupil premium spending. However, a review is due to take place early in the summer term. Senior leaders provide governors with detailed information about the progress that disadvantaged pupils make. Leaders are beginning to evaluate the impact of their actions to ensure that pupils are making the best possible progress.

Governors have benefited from working alongside a national leader of governance. A representative of the local authority has also worked alongside governors to develop their skills in asking more probing questions about aspects of the school's performance. Governors have worked in close partnership with the local authority to source the support of the associate deputy headteacher. Their skills in holding one another and senior leaders to account are improving.

Improved leadership in mathematics and English is securing better outcomes for pupils and helping to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders have benefited from working alongside advisers from the local authority. Checks on the quality of teaching and work in pupils' books are helping them pinpoint where support is needed. Leaders have focused on developing the sequences of learning so that they are now coherent. Expectations are communicated well to staff.

Focused leadership in assessment is also enabling teachers to think about how teaching sequences build upon prior learning. Leaders have moved to a system of

assessment that encourages teachers to reflect daily on what learning has taken place and what the next steps for pupils might be. This work is at an early stage of development. Therefore, it is difficult to measure the full impact at this stage.

Effective leadership in the early years has ensured that this area of the school continues to improve. Leaders have put coherent plans in place, ensuring that the proportion of pupils who achieve a good level of development has continued to increase. As a result, more children are prepared for Year 1.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching is now more focused. The associate deputy headteacher and subject leaders for mathematics and English are working alongside teachers to model parts of lessons. Leaders regularly check on the quality of pupils' work and share their findings openly with teachers in order to rapidly improve the quality of planning and teaching across a wide range of subjects. However, leaders have been hampered in their actions by the high turnover of staff in the school.

Teachers feel more supported in their roles. They recognise that teaching and learning are much stronger than they were at the time of the previous inspection. They have benefited from visiting local outstanding schools to help them reflect upon and develop their own skills. Working alongside colleagues in a wide range of local schools has helped teachers to check the accuracy of their assessment judgements. Teachers feel positive and reassured that they are doing the right thing.

Leaders have ensured that teachers have received training to enable them to teach writing better. Local authority advisers for mathematics and English have worked alongside teachers to develop their skills. From looking in pupils' books, it is evident that most teachers are now planning activities in logical sequences that build well upon prior learning and assessment information.

Enrichment activities broaden pupils' experiences. For example, the children in the early years recently visited a farm to bring this aspect of their learning to life. They use money each day provided by the staff to purchase toast and milk so that they may develop their communication skills and their understanding of mathematics. The exciting outdoor learning environment provides children with further opportunities to explore the world around them. Most children are focused and eager to learn.

The teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1 is well planned. Leaders have really thought about the processes for how phonics is taught. However, with the very high turnover of pupils who speak English as an additional language, they have had to be very creative and responsive to meet the many and varied needs of pupils.

The impact of a renewed approach to standards and expectations is evident in most year groups. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are challenged well across the curriculum and, in the majority of year groups, they are making better progress. Most pupils take pride in their learning and take care to produce their best work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders have been dogged in their drive to improve attendance for all groups of pupils. They recognise the need to ensure that pupils are in school, on time, each day. Because of their effective actions, attendance of pupils has improved since the previous inspection and is now broadly in line with the national average. Rates of persistent absence have fallen significantly. However, they remain higher than the national average. Leaders continue to monitor this work very closely, checking that no groups are disadvantaged by poor attendance.

Most pupils enjoy attending school. They said that the teachers are fair and are kind to them. Pupils are well aware of the school rules and the rewards and consequences associated with the behaviour policy. Pupils said that there were still occurrences of poor behaviour. However, they were keen to state that behaviour has improved. This was evident in pupils' behaviours observed during the inspection. The majority of pupils are polite and well mannered, and they are proud of their school.

Pupils are taking more pride in their learning. They are enjoying having work that challenges them. They said that they find mathematics a little easier than English. Pupils are quick to get to work when lessons begin. Pupils are frustrated that they do not have regular music or drama lessons.

In response to the previous inspection, the roles of pastoral lead and a mentor for children, parents and community work were created. Leaders are now much more proactive in the pursuit of improved behaviour and communication with parents. A renewed focus on this aspect of their work has led to a significant fall in previously high rates of disruptive behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Published outcomes for pupils indicate that the strongest gains are being made in the early years. For three consecutive years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has continued to increase. In 2018, this was broadly in line with the national average. Consequently, more children were well prepared for key stage 1. English and mathematics attainment increased in key stage 1 but remained below the national average. Although there were improvements in the progress that pupils make by the end of key stage 2, their progress remained well below the national average in reading and mathematics.

Leaders have been proactive in their determination to improve the quality of teaching and to raise aspirations among pupils and expectations among teachers. One of the interesting ways in which they have tackled this has been the introduction of life skills lessons. For example, pupils learn about the need to save money, while developing an emerging understanding of financial management. This, in turn, is helping pupils to consider the next stages of their education and what they might want to be when they are older.

Leaders have begun to redesign the curriculum on offer. They have recognised through their monitoring activities that more work needs to be done to develop pupils' skills and knowledge in specific subjects. As a result, they have begun to move away from a thematic approach to their curriculum design. The impact of this work is most evident in science. Pupils are now planning experiments, testing and finding things out for themselves. They are applying their writing and mathematical skills in this area with increasing levels of confidence.

Performance information and work in pupils' books indicate that most groups of pupils are making good and improved rates of progress. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND make good progress. Improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' behaviour are beginning to impact positively on pupils' experiences and performance. However, leaders are aware that there is still a long way to go to ensure that the efforts of their work are embedded over time and all groups of pupils attain similar standards to other pupils nationally.

External support

School leaders are engaging effectively with the archdiocese and the local authority to gain the most from the support they receive. This work is valuable in making a difference, and high levels of training are helping to empower staff while developing their skills.

Local authority and archdiocesan officers meet with school leaders regularly. They are developing skills and expertise within governors and senior leaders to help them to improve the school.

The support of the local authority has been instrumental in sourcing the support of an associate deputy headteacher to work alongside senior leaders.