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18 June 2021

Rachel Davidson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Davidson

Special measures monitoring inspection of Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Jackie Stillings, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 18 and 19 May 2021, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in April 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. We discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in our evaluation.

Having considered 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 school may appoint newly qualified teachers to any year group before the next 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 reports website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18 May 2021 and 19 May 2021

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in May 2019, leaders have appointed a Year 4 teacher and a newly qualified teacher to the Nursery class. Leaders have also appointed a 'children and family mentor' to support pupils' welfare. There is now a new chair of governors and a new local authority governor.

The progress made towards the removal of special measures

Since the school's last section 5 inspection in April 2018, leaders have persevered in their work to improve the education that pupils receive. With growing success, leaders are creating an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There is an increasingly calm and ordered atmosphere in the school. Staff have the best interests of all pupils at heart. Leaders' increasing capacity to secure improvement means they have established a firm foundation for future success.

There is a suitable improvement plan in place which is helping staff to bring about the necessary developments to the quality of pupils' education. It contains detailed and appropriate actions. The plan has targets that help leaders know if their actions are working. However, these targets lack sufficient detail to indicate how the planned actions will benefit pupils.

Leaders continue to take appropriate action to bring about the improvements that the school needs. They have prioritised the teaching of reading. Leaders have refined the school's phonics programme and ensured that staff received training on how to teach phonics. Children and pupils are growing in confidence in using their phonics knowledge to read an improved range of books. Teachers provide a variety of extra sessions to help pupils catch up. This has helped those pupils who have missed learning because of the pandemic. However, a few pupils who find reading more difficult are not reading their books as fluently as they should. This is because teachers have not given them enough practice to help them to remember securely the phonics that they have been learning.

Leaders have done much work that is strengthening other aspects of pupils' reading knowledge. As a result, pupils' interest in reading is growing stronger and most pupils are becoming more fluent readers, especially in key stage 2. Leaders are ambitious for what they want pupils to be able to do by the end of each year. Leaders have broken this down into a logical order across each half-term. However, there is currently not enough detail about the content that they have chosen to enable pupils to reach the reading goals that leaders have set.

There has been considerable improvement in the quality of learning in mathematics. There is now a more organised structure to the curriculum. Leaders have made it clearer what pupils will learn and when. As a result, pupils are now remembering more of what they learn. Leaders have checked for missing knowledge among pupils, which has come about because of the disruption caused by COVID-19. To help pupils to catch up, leaders have changed the order in which staff are teaching mathematics. For example, in key stage 2, many pupils are currently learning about fractions. However, some pupils are still learning about multiplication and division. This is because they need to get better at these areas of learning before they can move on to fractions. Leaders have suitable ways of checking how much pupils have remembered at the end of a topic. There is still a little work to do to establish a more systematic approach to making sure that pupils remember what they learn day by day.

Leaders are improving the quality of writing that pupils produce. There is now a greater consistency in the order in which pupils learn about how to create different types of writing, such as reports or stories. Leaders link the texts that staff use in reading to the teaching of writing effectively. They have placed a stronger emphasis on strengthening pupils' vocabulary since the previous inspection. This is resulting in pupils becoming increasingly adventurous in their choice of phrasing. However, there are some aspects of the writing curriculum that leaders have not put in the right order. For instance, older pupils occasionally learn writing features that they should have already learned in a lower year group.

There have also been improvements to subjects in the wider curriculum. In history, for example, there has been substantial improvement to the organisation of the knowledge pupils will learn. As a result, most pupils are becoming more proficient at remembering previous knowledge and using it in their current learning. In other subjects, such as geography and foreign languages, leaders are working effectively to develop each curriculum so that it is clearer about what pupils should learn and when. Leaders are continuing with their plans to develop more structured ways in which they assess how well pupils are doing in these subjects. This is contributing to improvements in what pupils know and remember. However, leaders are not as far forward in these subjects as they are with history.

Many children start school in Nursery with limited understanding of spoken English. From the outset, staff help children to use language and communication to enable them to access all areas of learning fully. This approach is having an increasingly positive impact. For example, children are becoming more confident in speaking and listening because staff encourage them to use lots of different words. This is enabling children to know more in other areas of learning. For example, they are beginning to understand life cycles by watching chicks hatching and talking about what they can see. Improvements in the early years are ensuring that children are being better prepared for Year 1.

Governors have a strong understanding of their role in improving the school. Governors provide school leaders with useful challenge and support. They ask important questions about what school leaders are doing to make the school better and whether their actions are working. Their work is contributing positively to the improving picture of the quality of education in the school.

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are improving. Leaders have revised their approach to managing pupils' behaviour. The new guidance helps staff to respond to incidents more consistently across the school. Pupils who spoke with us said that there is still some misbehaviour and occasional bullying. However, they told us that staff are good at dealing with incidents. Pupils' attendance has been steadily improving since the last inspection. This is because leaders have strengthened the ways in which they encourage attendance. For example, leaders give rewards to classes for good attendance and chase up pupils who are absent without an acceptable reason. The visible improvements to pupils' behaviour and attitudes are an important factor in the growing improvements that leaders are bringing about.

There is an improving range of provision for pupils' personal development. Leaders provide 'get set for life' lessons every week to all year groups, which are contributing to pupils' increasing self-confidence. There are activities in place to teach pupils about equality and respect for people's differences. Some activities designed to enrich the curriculum have recently had to be cut back because of the government's restrictions in response to COVID-19. However, leaders have plans to restart events, such as educational visits to support pupils' learning, whenever it becomes possible.

Staff believe that leaders are supportive and do all they can to manage teachers' workload. Leaders have also provided a variety of training for staff in a wide range of curriculum subjects and other areas, such as how to support pupils with SEND. This training is helping to ensure that leaders continue to improve the education that pupils receive.

Additional support

Leaders feel satisfied with the support that the local authority has provided. It is contributing positively to the improvements that they are making. They have used the help from independent consultants to bring about improvements in English and mathematics. Face-to-face support was paused because of the pandemic, but visits by these consultants are due to start again as soon as possible.

The archdiocese is contributing positively to the improvements that are taking place. Leaders have used the support from advisers to strengthen the work of the governing body. These advisers have also helped with the recruitment of new governors since the last inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Inspectors held meetings with representatives of the local authority and the archdiocese. They held a virtual meeting with the chair of governors. They met with two groups of pupils from key stage 2 to discuss matters such as personal development and behaviour. Inspectors looked at a variety of documentation, including the school's improvement plan, curriculum plans and schemes of work, documents relating to safeguarding and minutes of meetings of the governing body. Accompanied by senior leaders, inspectors carried out joint visits to lessons in reading, writing, mathematics and history in most year groups, including the early years. Inspectors spoke with pupils from some of the lessons they visited and looked at their work. Inspectors analysed 28 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. They also looked at one free-text response to Parent View and nine recent responses to the school's own online parental survey.