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10 May 2013

Christopher Mabey and Gael Hicks
Acting Co-Headteachers
St Francis Catholic Primary School
Maryland Park
London
E15 1HB

Dear Mr Mabey and Mrs Hicks

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Francis Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 May 2013, 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 which 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 which took place in January 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the acting co-headteachers and other senior staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and the headteacher designate. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection in January, one teacher has left. A substantive headteacher has been appointed and will take up the role from September 2013. In the meantime, two headteachers from local primary schools continue to lead the school jointly.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

As headteachers of local outstanding schools, the acting co-headteachers bring strength to the leadership of the school. They have a track record of improving their

own schools, one of which is a teaching school, and have set clear expectations of staff at St Francis'. Staff are, reportedly, positive about their approach and are keen to improve. The headteacher designate is a regular visitor to school. She is liaising closely with the co-headteachers, joining meetings with staff and governors, and laying the foundations for a smooth transition in September.

The school's action plan, produced jointly with the local authority, requires a few small amendments to ensure that all the improvement points set out in the inspection report are covered completely. For example, the work being done to engage with parents and carers, through sharing information regularly via newsletters and the school's website, is not reflected in the plan. The plan would also benefit from including the targets set for each year group in addition to those already included for Year 2 and Year 6. Nonetheless, the plan sets out the right kinds of actions with a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning through a programme of training. Importantly, the plan is flexible to allow for actions to be adapted to meet the changing needs of the school.

Much action has taken place already. Senior leaders check the quality of teaching regularly, give teachers feedback on their teaching and set targets for improvement that are followed up in the next observation. All staff have had their performance checked in a formal way and have been set targets that relate to the amount of progress their pupils make. Systems for checking how much progress pupils make are being strengthened to provide teachers with clearer information. Training to help subject leaders develop their skills to carry out their leadership role has begun. There is more to do in this regard and also to ensure that all staff who hold leadership responsibilities are clear about their leadership roles.

The governing body has been strengthened by an additional governor who brings much expertise to the role. Following the inspection, many governors attended a Saturday workshop where a governors' action plan was drafted which sets out clearly those areas that need improvement. Each governing body meeting includes an element of training for governors. The inspection's criticism of governance has helped governors to become more focused in their work. It is clear from the minutes of their meetings that governors are starting to ask questions of the school's leaders based on the detailed information they receive about, for example, the progress of different groups of pupils. Their role in checking that the school's actions are having the desired impact is not rigorous enough.

Since before the inspection, the local authority has had concerns about the slow pace of improvement at the school. Hence the support of the two acting co-headteachers was arranged along with support from staff at their schools. The local authority retains a large role in checking formally that the school's actions are having

the desired effect on improving teaching and increasing pupils' rates of progress. Support is planned flexibly to meet the school's changing needs.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

As agreed during the monitoring inspection, the school may appoint one newly qualified teacher before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Newham, and the Diocese of Brentwood. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector