

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5323
Direct email: suzy.smith@tribalgroup.com

27 June 2014

Ms Natasha Scott
Headteacher
St Francis' Catholic Primary School
Maryland Park
London
E15 1HB

Dear Ms Scott

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Francis' Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Veronica Young, Additional inspector, to your school on 25 and 26 June 2014, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint one newly qualified teacher, if necessary, before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise pupils' attainment by:
 - ensuring teachers have higher expectations and set work which matches pupils' different learning needs
 - making sure teachers talk less in lessons and provide more opportunities for pupils to work by themselves so that they remain involved in their work and behaviour improves
 - ensuring lessons move at a brisk pace and that more-able pupils are suitably challenged to reach higher levels of attainment
 - encouraging more-able pupils in Years 5 and 6 to read more challenging texts
 - ensuring that reading, writing, communication and mathematics are taught effectively across the school.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
 - making sure all leaders, especially subject leaders, have the necessary skills to check on pupils' progress and know what needs to be improved and how to hold teachers to account
 - making sure that the school's policies for marking and managing behaviour are implemented consistently
 - ensuring there are systems to accurately measure pupils' progress, and that these are used to highlight how different groups and individuals are achieving and to promote rapid improvements
 - developing plans for improvement with suitable timescales and clear criteria against which success can be measured
 - fully implementing procedures for managing the performance of staff so that teaching becomes securely good for all pupils
 - strengthening systems for engaging with parents and carers so they express greater confidence in the school
 - ensuring the governing body is able to perform its duties effectively and, in particular, to hold leaders to account more rigorously.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 June 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other staff with leadership roles, four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors spoke with two groups of pupils and met a small group of parents and carers who had come to the school for another meeting.

Context

The deputy headteacher returned to school for a short while this term before being absent again. A new member of staff, who will take responsibility for leading the Early Years Foundation Stage in September, started working in the school for two days per week after half term. Five teachers intend to leave at the end of term and will be replaced at the start of the new academic year. There have been some changes to the governing body.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Attainment at the end of the Reception Year is better this year than last. In particular the proportion exceeding expected levels is higher. Although communication and language, reading and writing are weaker aspects of learning, this group of children is better prepared for Year 1. Results of the Year 1 phonics screening check are also better than last year. Pupils in Year 2 who were retested because of poor results last year have also met the expected level. The school predicts that assessments of reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2 are likely to be stronger than last year; writing remains the weaker element. Similarly, performance in tests in Year 6 is predicted to be better than last year's, including an increase in the proportion reaching Level 5. Attainment in other year groups still shows a mixed picture with reading stronger overall than writing and mathematics. In some year groups the proportions working at the levels they should be for their age are too low.

Rates of progress are improving overall but are too variable between classes, year groups and groups of pupils, including those that are eligible for free school meals, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This mixed picture is reflected in the learning seen during the inspection, where pupils' progress was determined by the quality and appropriateness of the activities provided. In mathematics, for example, gaps in previous learning mean that pupils find it difficult to apply a mathematical process to a task. For some, lack of confidence compounds their difficulty. The focus on developing pupils' vocabulary is reaping rewards that can be seen in pupils' work. However, pupils do not always proofread their written

work to correct spelling and grammatical errors. A reading programme that is followed consistently in Key Stage 1 is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

The quality of teaching

Some of the improvements in teaching noted previously have been sustained. However, some weaker aspects and inconsistencies remain. These stem from individual members of staff who are not following agreed practices and school policies.

The wide range of attainment in most classes is proving a challenge for some teachers. At times there is a mismatch of expectations so that the level of work is not set at the right level; lower attainers are not supported well enough and higher attainers are not challenged enough. Teachers' planning is not always modified enough to take account of the work that pupils did in the previous lesson. Planning that is shared between teachers in the same year group or that comes from a published scheme is not always tailored to the specific needs of the class. The quality of teachers' questioning is variable. While some questioning probes pupils' understanding and extends their thinking by demanding more explanation, some merely checks pupils' knowledge.

Leaders have done much to improve the use of targets for pupils. Target cards for writing and mathematics are evident in all classes but are not always referred to during lessons. The targets do not always relate directly to weaknesses in pupils' work; there is more to do to ensure that findings from teachers' marking feed into pupils' targets. Overall, peer marking and self-assessment are regular but pupils do not always respond to teachers' marking of their work.

The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to improve with more interesting and varied activities from which children can choose, especially in the nursery. Nonetheless, everyday activities to promote children's mathematical development are not prominent. The new leader recognises this weakness and also knows that there is more to do to ensure that staff are clear about what children are expected to learn from the activities they choose. A new system for observing and recording children's learning has been put in place to address some of the issues raised at the last monitoring inspection. However, random sampling of children's records show continuing variability in the way staff use the system.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils continue to respond positively, especially to practical activities, and are keen to learn. Where pupils are clear about what to do and how to do it, they rise to teachers' challenges. Some become restless when introductions to lessons go on too long and they are waiting to get on with their work. Pupils work well together when given the opportunity. Their personal development is promoted effectively through a

range of cultural events and visits. Music plays an important part in the life of the school, with all pupils in Years 5 and 6 learning to play a musical instrument.

The playground is well supervised and pupils of different ages get on well with each other. They are surrounded by an ethos of kindness and friendship, which is promoted strongly by staff and in displays. Pupils say they feel safe in school and agree that incidents of bullying are rare. There has been only one fixed-term exclusion since the previous monitoring inspection, which was recorded and dealt with appropriately. Attendance is above average.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The absence of the deputy headteacher is not holding back the senior leadership team from pushing forward the changes that need to be made. Senior staff and subject leaders are stepping up to support the headteacher's drive for improvement. Expectations of staff with leadership roles are clear. Increasingly, they undertake activities to check the quality of provision. Monitoring is more rigorous and the frequency has been increased. Staff receive clear feedback from leaders on what they are doing well and what must be improved. In the main, staff fulfil their professional responsibility to follow the school's policies and implement practices consistently. However, lack of consistency in teaching quality shows that agreed systems are not yet fixed in some teachers' practice. The school's action plan continually evolves as leaders evaluate the impact of actions taken. Nonetheless, the plan requires some further updating to reset timelines and milestones for the next academic year.

Systems for tracking pupils' progress continue to improve. Importantly, class teachers are more involved in identifying which pupils are not making enough progress and in setting out actions to take to support those pupils in class. Programmes of support for specific groups of pupils have not always had the desired effect and so have been reorganised for the new academic year. The school is changing the way support will be allocated to individuals and groups of pupils with specific interventions provided by qualified teachers. As the quality of teaching improves in class so the school should be less reliant on programmes to help pupils catch up.

The governing body has been strengthened with two new appointments. The small core of governors that do the bulk of the work is gradually growing. Governors have made a positive start to undertaking a programme of visits to the school to see it in operation. Importantly, the visits have a clear focus that is linked to the school's action plan and the outcomes of the visit are reported to all governors. Parents and carers that spoke to inspectors recognise many positive changes in the school but some feel that they are not kept up to date about what is going on. The school's leaders seek to engage with parents and carers in a number of ways through presentations, class assemblies, music concerts and plays. There is more to do to

engage parents and carers in supporting their children's learning, and in making sure they receive clear messages about how the school is tackling the areas for improvement.

External support

Regular visits from the local authority's link inspector provide valuable support for the headteacher, both strategically and in moderating her view of the quality of provision. Support from consultants through the local cluster of schools, and from a local school, is beginning to have an impact on the quality of improvements in provision, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Governors benefit from bespoke training and support from governors' services in Newham.