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24 February 2015

Miss Wendy Steciuk
Headteacher
St Philip Howard Catholic School
St Mary's Road
Glossop
SK13 8DR

Dear Miss Steciuk

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of St Philip Howard Catholic School

Following my visit to your school on 23 February 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in November 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, members of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and representatives of the local authority and the Diocese of Nottingham. I visited classes across the school with you and the assistant headteacher. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection the special educational needs coordinator has left the school. An existing member of staff is covering this post on a temporary basis. The deputy headteacher has been absent from school since January and is not due to return until the summer term. Coordinators for literacy and numeracy were appointed in January. Two temporary assistant special educational needs coordinators were appointed in February 2015. An attendance officer was recruited

in January, working five mornings per week. The governing body and the local diocese are currently consulting with the Department for Education regarding possible academy status.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Leaders and managers have responded quickly to the recommendations set out in the section 5 report. They have worked with external partners to devise a detailed plan of action to improve the school. While the school improvement plan, including the pupil premium action plan, contains a number of appropriate actions, the way leaders measure their success is not clear enough. There are insufficient measurable success criteria relating to students' performance. This means that governors and other stakeholders may not be able to hold leaders to account as well as they should. The plan does not identify who is responsible for evaluating the actions taken or the strengths and weaknesses of the work done by the school. This omission needs to be tackled so that the evaluations can inform the decisions to be made about the next steps to be taken.

A number of immediate actions have been taken. These include the introduction of a behaviour management system and a new marking and assessment policy. During the visits to classrooms, I noted that teachers make good use of assessment information on students' prior and current attainment and progress to plan lessons. Many subject teams now mark students' work in accordance with school policy but this is not consistent. The training and development of teachers are rightly at the heart of the school's improvement planning.

The school is calm and orderly. No low-level disruption was seen during the monitoring visit. Students were engaged and focused during the lessons visited. Recent monitoring of students' behaviour by school leaders suggests that behaviour in lessons is improving. Effective training to improve behaviour, with both staff and students, is making a difference.

Governors are knowledgeable and committed. They have a clear vision for the school and understand precisely what is needed to ensure that it is good or better. They have taken steps to ensure that you and the other current leaders are supported to bring about much needed improvements to the school. However, the current leadership structure is not secure. There are too many temporary posts in the leadership group, and some members of the team have not always been given the time they need to carry out their duties. The leadership team is relying on external support to plug the gaps in essential leadership responsibilities and expertise, such as those related to data and curriculum management. Unless stability and clear leadership structures are established, progress towards the removal of the category of serious weakness may be limited.

The local authority and the Diocese of Nottingham have provided important training and support. The statement of action is compliant. Arrangements for keeping

parents informed about the school's progress are identified, although the dates of meeting times are not clearly conveyed. The local authority's representative is aware of this and is taking steps to ensure that parents are informed of all future meetings and communications. Coaching programmes and middle leader courses give key leaders opportunities to develop the skills necessary to support priority improvement plans. A deputy headteacher works with the school for half a day a week to develop staff knowledge and understanding of the new data systems introduced. A national leader of education (NLE) visits leaders weekly to provide support and challenge for leaders. He has a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector