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Mrs Rachel Girling
Acting Headteacher
Holy Souls Catholic Primary School
Mallard Close
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Dear Mrs Girling

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Holy Souls Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13–14 September 2018, 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 that 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 January 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met the acting headteacher and other senior leaders as well as middle leaders. I also met members of the governing body including the chair, as well as representatives from the local authority and the diocese. I spoke to 10 parents and met a group of pupils. I also spoke by telephone to a school improvement partner from a company commissioned on behalf of the local authority. I carried out joint visits with senior leaders to parts of seven lessons, focusing on provision and outcomes for most-able pupils. I looked at key documents and policies for safeguarding, as well as the local authority's statements of action and the school's development plan.

Context

The previous headteacher left at the end of the summer term 2018. The deputy headteacher was appointed as acting headteacher and the assistant headteacher as acting deputy headteacher from the start of this term. Two new assistant

headteachers were also appointed from September 2018. A middle leader has been appointed very recently to lead on the safeguarding curriculum.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders and governors have worked hard to address the weaknesses in safeguarding identified during the last inspection. They have taken a positive attitude to addressing the issues with urgency. There has also been a culture shift, exemplified by a comment from a governor, representing the view of others, 'We no longer take anything for granted.' Although less than two weeks into their roles, the newly appointed acting headteacher and other senior leaders have continued this positive approach.

The school's leaders and governors have engaged fully with the local authority's safeguarding team, the diocese and support commissioned on behalf of the local authority. All of the additional support to date has focused on the school's number one priority of safeguarding.

All of the parents spoken to on the gate were highly positive about the school's arrangements for safeguarding. They had every confidence in the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher. They said that last year there had been some incidents of bullying and misbehaviour, but they were impressed with the way senior leaders responded to resolve cases, in one instance, 'within the hour'. Leaders and other staff were described as highly approachable.

All pupils spoken to rated the school as 'ten out of ten' for keeping them safe and secure. They knew what to do to keep safe when using the computer, and if they get lost in town, and could talk confidently about site security and road safety.

Changes to a more secure electronic reporting system of safeguarding issues have helped to transform the culture. Leaders' close monitoring and reviewing of any emerging issues ensures that incidents are shared quickly with relevant external agencies and recorded thoroughly.

Staff understand the systems in place for reporting safeguarding incidents. They know what to do and who to report to if they have any concerns, even if they seem small or insignificant. They have all had very recent training on the very latest safeguarding guidance to ensure that they are fully up to date.

Staff spoken to were clear in their understanding of the use of physical intervention. A number of staff have received specific training on this and there are plans for the training to be rolled out to all staff. Key policies have been revised to take account of the use of reasonable force and recent key changes to safeguarding guidance. These are due for ratification at the next full governing body later this month.

Plans are in place to teach safeguarding lessons through the curriculum this year

from early years to Year 6, but this has not yet commenced.

The governing body's enhanced safeguarding team are clear in their responsibilities and duties. Governing-body minutes show the high priority that governors have attached to safeguarding. They have put in place a comprehensive programme for evaluating all relevant policies including safeguarding, care and control, behaviour and anti-bullying.

Following the last inspection, all middle leaders received training so that they fully understood their roles and responsibilities. All are required to produce action plans linked to their areas of responsibility, which includes managing a budget. They are engaged in the scrutiny of pupils' books and analysis of lesson planning. To date, however, they have not been engaged in any formal monitoring of teaching or analysis of pupils' outcomes. Most of those spoken to, including some very new to their leadership roles, were highly ambitious and aspirational for their future leadership careers.

Following the last inspection, leaders and governors commissioned an external review on teaching and learning with a focus on most-able pupils. This reported favourably on teachers' work to improve outcomes for this group. Evidence from this inspection visit indicates that teachers had planned more challenging work for most-able pupils. Most of the pupils spoken to felt there was just the right level of challenge. A small minority said that at times the work was too easy where they had to wait for others to catch up. Provisional outcomes in tests and assessments in Year 6 in 2018 indicate that a larger proportion of pupils compared to 2017 reached a high standard in reading and were working in greater depth in writing. A large percentage of pupils continued to reach a high standard in mathematics.

Leaders' monitoring of the progress of pupils, including the most able, last year in Year 6 and for those currently in the school, is at an early stage of development. This is despite the fact that in the two previous years (2016 and 2017) the progress of most-able pupils in writing from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2 was in the lowest 20% nationally.

Leaders, governors and external partners all recognise that there now needs to be a greater focus by senior leaders on analysing and improving outcomes for all pupils. Since the last inspection there has been insufficient emphasis in governing-body meetings and committees on pupils' outcomes, including for the most able, as they focused their attention primarily on meeting their safeguarding responsibilities.

Despite the gains made by most-able pupils in 2018, unvalidated results in the most recent tests and assessments at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 suggest that there has been an overall fall in outcomes for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.

As acting headteacher you have continued with many of the roles you held as deputy headteacher, including senior designated safeguarding lead and special

educational needs coordinator. The recent appointment of additional senior leaders has provided the potential for relinquishing some of your roles in the future in order to provide more capacity for leadership in safeguarding. There is now an urgent need for leaders to focus more on analysing pupils' outcomes to identify whether individuals and groups of pupils are making sufficient progress.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector