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Reverend Denise Luke
Headteacher
Radcliffe Hall Church of England/Methodist Controlled Primary School
Bury Street
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Dear Reverend Luke

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Radcliffe Hall Church of England/Methodist Controlled Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 24 January 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also extend my thanks to the staff, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority officer with whom I met.

Since the last inspection, a newly qualified teacher has been appointed to Year 5 to cover a member of staff on maternity leave and two new governors have joined the governing body. There is a governor vacancy for which the school has recently canvassed for nominations.

As a result of the inspection on 8 June 2011, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Rigorous action taken by the school to tackle previous underachievement is starting to have a positive effect on rates of progress and levels of attainment. This is due to the combination of the effective use of a rigorous system for checking pupils' progress, professional development activities based on staff need and involving each pupil in evaluating their progress. The school's most recent assessments show that pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is getting better. Pupils in Year 6 are set to reach challenging targets in the National Curriculum tests in 2012; an improvement on the 2011 results. Progress is strongest across the school in reading; supported by the review of the use of the library and a substantial investment in purchasing books which interest pupils. The school has taken steps to improve writing, including the introduction of the 'big write', but progress in this subject is less consistent. Attainment has risen in mathematics due to a whole-school focus, although there is variation in progress across the school.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Staff have been involved in developing a suite of policies which guide their work, for example, in teaching and learning, handwriting, calculation and marking. Consequently, expectations of what pupils' can achieve have risen and staff are working as a team to improve attainment. Staff have received training in using effective strategies for developing calculation and the vocabulary of mathematics. Working walls have been introduced into each class which act as valuable prompts to remind pupils of prior learning and aid future learning. Handwriting and presentation styles are more consistent throughout the school and pupils take more pride in their work. However, the overuse of work-sheets limits pupils' independent skills in writing.

Staff have received training in 'assertive mentoring' as a tool for assessing pupils' work and checking on progress. Each pupil discusses their progress with the teacher; gaps in learning are identified and targets are set. This process has increased staff confidence in using assessment information to plan tasks that meet the needs of pupils more closely. However, there is still an opportunity for this information to be used to set work more specifically suited to individual pupils. Pupils commented on more interesting activities in lessons. In workbooks, pupils evaluate their own progress, pictorially, against the target. Regular marking using the 'tickled pink' and 'green for growth' system provides pupils with appropriate feedback which acknowledges their efforts and gives guidance on how to improve their work. However, senior leaders recognise that the guidance is not always explicitly focused on the next steps pupils should take to improve their learning, nor are opportunities given for pupils to respond to the teacher's comments. 'Peer assessment' and 'talking partners' exemplify positive strategies for pupils to check their own progress and that of their classmates, however, these strategies have yet to be embedded throughout the school.

Senior leaders have introduced a robust process of on-going support, training and monitoring of the quality of teaching through a range of activities. These include dual observations of lessons with local authority officers, scrutiny of teachers' planning, scrutiny of pupils' work and half-termly meetings to discuss pupils' progress. A more rigorous system for tracking pupils' progress has been implemented which directly links to the assertive mentoring system. As a result, senior leaders more carefully interrogate assessment information and implement support for pupils at risk of underachieving.

Since the inspection, senior leaders have continued with their programme to improve the school's learning environment. New ceilings, carpets and furniture have been installed and the welcoming reception area celebrates pupils' good quality art work, which is also displayed with pride around the school. However, senior leaders and the governing body understand that significant funds are needed to raise the quality of the learning environment to the level necessary to support a greater uplift in pupils' achievement. To this end the local authority has submitted a bid for funding and awaits a decision from the Department of Education.

The local authority's statement of action was evaluated and met requirements. It is a clear and progressive plan which offers support and challenge to the governing body and senior

leaders. The good quality of the local authority's support, including the appointment of a local headteacher to the governing body, has been welcomed by the school. With an increased team approach to improvement and the recent upgrade in the fabric of the learning environment, staff morale has improved.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Mulgrew
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2011.

- Accelerate progress to raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - enabling pupils to organise and improve their writing using richer vocabulary and more accurate spelling
 - developing a consistent handwriting and presentation style
 - ensuring a consistent method of calculation is embedded throughout the school
 - developing pupils' ability to understand the language of mathematical problems so that they can use and apply their numeracy skills confidently.

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by:
 - increasing teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - ensuring that assessment information is used to provide tasks that challenge pupils of all abilities
 - improving the quality of marking so pupils know how to improve their work.

- Improve the learning environment in all areas of the school.