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18 December 2012

Mrs Jane Nellar
Headteacher
Saint Lawrence's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Heslington Road
York
North Yorkshire
YO10 5BW

Dear Mrs Nellar

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Saint Lawrence's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 December 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, two members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. School documentation and monitoring information was reviewed.

Context

There have been a few changes in the context of the school since the last inspection. One teacher is currently absent from work due to sickness. A temporary teacher has been recruited to teach this class. This brings the number of newly qualified teachers employed by the school up to six and the total number of teachers employed on a temporary basis to five. There is a vacancy on the governing body for a parent governor.

Main findings

The headteacher and staff have earnestly begun to tackle the issues identified in the previous inspection report. The school improvement plan has been re-written to include the areas for improvement which were identified at the last inspection. This represents a well thought out plan for improvement. The improvement plan identifies clear success criteria and timescales for implementation. Although the arrangements for checking on the impact of planned actions identifies how and who will check on the implementation it does not stipulate when this will be done.

Appropriate actions, including training, are being taken to support staff and any underperformance is being challenged. Arrangements are in place to support the work and development of the newly qualified teachers, using both school based support and support from the local authority and other schools. The school's own monitoring of teaching and learning shows some signs of improvements being made. Self-evaluation uses a good range of evidence including the regular evaluation of lessons. This has identified explicitly where most guidance and support are needed. Lessons are evaluated robustly and clearly identify strengths along with areas where teaching can be improved.

The high proportion of newly qualified teachers employed at the school offers both opportunities and potential risks to the task of bringing about sustained improvements. The headteacher and governors are clear that new recruits offer the school the opportunity to improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers are able to implement agreed policies and practices. They are also aware that the high proportion of staff employed on temporary contracts means that there are risks in terms of securing the longer term stability of staffing and thereby securing good teaching over time.

The work of the Governing Body is showing signs of improvement. A key driver of this has been the work of the Executive Chair of Governors, who is a national leader of governance. She has provided support for the Vice Chair of Governors and has helped governors to review their ways of working. Governors are provided with a good range of information, in the form of the headteacher's report to the governing body along with termly data covering pupil progress and attainment. Although the headteacher's reports are of a good quality there is scope to more explicitly align her reports with other documents which identify progress against each of the areas for improvement.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- Further improve the school improvement plan so that it identifies detailed timescales for when checks will be made on the implementation of planned improvements.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Senior leaders and members of the Governing Body are engaging well with the local authority. The local authority provides both challenge and support to the school and has correctly identified that the current staffing circumstances mean that some elements of the school's work is not completely secure. The local authority has been instrumental in securing the support and on-going involvement of a National Leader of Governance and support from other schools.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for York and as below.

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali

Her Majesty's Inspector