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11 December 2012

Mrs H Brady
Headteacher
St Philip's CofE Primary
Barrow Street
Salford
Greater Manchester
M3 5LF

Dear Mrs Brady

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St Philip's CofE Primary

Following my visit to your school on 10 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 and deputy headteacher, four governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils. The school improvement plan was evaluated and other evaluation documents checked, including the outcomes of monitoring activities and performance management procedures. Minutes of recent governing body meetings were scrutinised.

Context

There have been no changes to the school's teaching staff since the inspection.

Main findings

Several staff were new to the school at the time of the inspection and had not previously been observed by leaders. Joint observations of teaching were carried out by the headteacher and local authority School Effectiveness Officer (SEO) soon after the inspection. Leaders and governors know that teaching and learning need to improve securely and quickly to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics for all pupils. The school's positive, inclusive learning environment and pupils' good behaviour and attitudes are rightly recognised as key strengths of the school. The governing body is increasing its awareness of the need to capitalise on this by ensuring that pupils make more rapid progress in their learning across the school from their starting points. Governors know that they could learn more about how to interpret and ask questions of the information the school holds on pupils' attainment and progress. The relatively small cohorts of pupils, and different proportions that have special educational needs, highlight the importance of analysing more closely the performance of specific groups or individual pupils. Governors are due to attend a training session covering this topic and are keen to develop their skills in questioning leaders and holding the school to account. They have drawn up an action plan to outline their priorities for meeting the needs of the school, and may modify this as necessary following training.

Some restructuring of classes in Upper Key Stage 2 has already taken place in response to the findings of the inspection and the school's review. Pupils in Year 6 feel that they are now getting a higher level of work and challenge appropriate to their needs. Senior leaders have reintroduced the expectation that teachers will use 'pupil progress grids' on which to record information about pupils' achievements and learning targets to inform lesson planning. Performance management systems are beginning to be reviewed in line with national recommendations and the expected Teachers' Standards.

Leaders have acted upon the need to consider carefully the allocation of teaching assistants to classes, groups of pupils or one-to-one intervention work. These revised arrangements will be reviewed regularly to check their impact on pupils' progress and the balance between adults' support and challenge, ensuring that expectations of pupils' independence are sufficiently high.

The school is part of an established partnership of schools in similar circumstances, and some joint working and sharing of ideas and training opportunities are in place. There are also plans for the school to access a training programme to support teachers in developing their skills to good and outstanding levels.

The school's summary improvement plan has been appropriately redrafted to focus succinctly on the areas identified at the inspection. The use of clear success criteria by which the school will measure its progress has been improved, although leaders acknowledge that some adjustments can be made to ensure these always point towards evidence of improvement in pupils' achievements.

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 recommends that further action is taken to:

- complete planned training for governors to develop their knowledge and skills in holding the school to account. They may also like to make use of the Ofsted publication 'School governance: learning from the best'
- ensure the planned building refurbishment work taking place next term is not allowed to distract leaders and staff from the key purpose of accelerating the rates of improvement in teaching and learning
- keep the school's improvement plan updated as a working document, keeping actions on track through clear guidance to staff, including timescales and planners of key assessment points and performance management milestones
- by spring half-term, check on the impact of intervention programmes on the progress made by particular groups or individual pupils.

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

External support

The local authority acted quickly to check on the school's progress and provide guidance to the governing body and leadership team. It will continue to monitor progress due to the school having been below floor standards for three years. The local authority is brokering the services of a National Leader in Education to work with senior leaders on developing their skills and capacity to sustain improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Marguerite Murphy

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority
- the academy chain where relevant
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.