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10 January 2013

Jennifer Hammersley
Headteacher
St Mary's CofE (A) First School
The Heath
Uttoxeter
ST14 7LX

Dear Mrs Hammersley

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St Mary's CofE (A) First School

Following my visit to your school on 10 January 2013, 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 on 25 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 other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and a group of pupils. The school improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the recent inspection, one member of staff has left the school. This post is currently being covered on a temporary basis by the deputy headteacher.

Main findings

Senior leaders are addressing with suitable urgency the areas identified for improvement at the recent section 5 inspection. Systems for checking the quality of teaching have been reviewed and a programme of rigorous monitoring is now in

place. This includes a range of activities such as scrutiny of planning, scrutiny of pupils' work and lesson observations.

The school has devised specific action plans to address the areas for improvement identified at the recent inspection. These include appropriate actions which are sharply focused on improving teaching and learning and raising attainment. For example, all teachers are being given opportunities to observe good practice with a focus on active and independent learning and challenge for all groups of pupils. As a result, pupils report that lessons are more interesting and challenging and their work is better matched to their needs.

The Governing Body has also made a positive response to the recommendations in the previous inspection. They are clear about developing their monitoring role in order to check that the school's actions are making a difference to pupils' learning and the quality of teaching. Consequently, they are scheduled to undertake a range of appropriate training opportunities this term.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommends a series of half day visits to carry out joint lesson observations with senior leaders to support the school in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

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

External support

The local authority appointed a new district manager for improvement to the school in September 2012. He has quickly become familiar with the school and the areas identified for improvement at the recent section 5 inspection. He has already provided the school with considerable support and is coordinating links with other local schools to enable teachers to visit good schools to observe and share good practice. Good support is being provided for governors, with appropriate training planned for this term.

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

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector