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Mrs Diane Bate
Headteacher
The District CofE Primary School
Patterson Street
Newton-le-Willows
Merseyside
WA12 9PZ

Dear Mrs Bate

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to The District CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 March 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 in December 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, the Chair and one other member of the Governing Body and a group of pupils. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority. The school's development plan and monitoring file was also evaluated.

Context

A new headteacher has taken up post from January 2013. She had previously worked in the school as the school improvement adviser. She was also part of the shared executive leadership of the school since September 2012.

Main findings

The District C of E Primary School is on a clear journey of improvement. There is an effective strategy in place linked to an attainment plan which is aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning. There is a clear vision of how the school can become a good school in the future. This plan is linked to clear targets and outcomes for both teachers and pupils. It is also well supported by a comprehensive range of professional development strategies. These are provided either by the local authority or are brokered from local

leading schools. The plan is firmly focussed on the school becoming a professional learning community.

The school was previously identified as at risk by the local authority and there was a clear improvement strategy already in place prior to the recent inspection. Improvements being initiated then were acknowledged as having an impact in the inspection report. The success of these has been built on since, although inconsistencies still remain within certain classrooms. Pupils are also clearly aware of the improvements which have been made. The school environment is now more conducive to learning with pupils' work on display and brightening up corridors and classrooms. Behaviour has also improved and marking in the majority of classes is more informative and enables pupils to know what they have to do to improve. Pupils stated that 'lessons are better and make us want to achieve'. In addition, provision for physical education has also improved through the appointment of a specialist instructor. There is also greater participation and involvement in enrichment and consolidation activities through a wider range of after school clubs. There is also evidence of improving standards. There is good evidence to suggest that the upward trajectory in standards will be maintained. Monitoring of teaching is more rigorous and accurate and involves the extended management team. This complements on-going monitoring by the local authority well. However, acknowledged weaknesses with the quality of the broader curriculum remain. Staff development is frequent and well organised and is now linked more closely to school priorities, performance management and outcomes for pupils. Teacher confidence, which was 'fragile', is being restored, staff absence is reduced and a more positive culture has become established. There is a clear commitment and desire across the school to improve provision for all pupils. The school is now in a much stronger position to make more rapid progress in the future. Pupils value these changes for the better; as one Year 6 pupil remarked 'I was looking forward to moving to the big school – but I'm not so sure now'.

Governors have played a significant role in supporting these improvements. They were prepared to delay the appointment of the new headteacher until they were confident that the right candidate could be appointed. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well and a positive and fruitful relationship is being nurtured with the new headteacher and staff at the school. They are firmly committed to the programme of school improvement being initiated.

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 recommend that further action is taken to:

- ensure that the drive to continue to raise attainment, especially in mathematics and reading, is maintained
- continue to build on the positive work being currently done to improve teaching so that more is consistently good across the school
- continue to develop middle leaders to ensure a more coherent approach to learning across the curriculum
- continue to implement and review the on-going programme of staff development to ensure it impacts on learning in the classroom

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

External support

The local authority has maintained a good level of support and will continue to provide termly monitoring visits. A review of teaching has recently been conducted with the majority of lessons graded good, although inconsistencies were also identified. Weaker teachers are being supported where appropriate through consultant help. A good working relationship forms the basis for this co-operative partnership which is beginning to improve classroom practice.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for St. Helens.

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

Her Majesty's Inspector