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14 March 2013

Mr David Goucher
Headteacher
St Michael's Church of England Junior School
Newton Road
Bath
BA2 1RW

Dear Mr Goucher

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to St Michael's Church of England Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 14 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 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and leaders for English, mathematics, special educational needs and pupil assessment. Meetings were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body, three governors, a representative of the local authority and the headteacher of a local primary school who, as a National Leader for Education, is providing support and expertise to the school. The school improvement plan was evaluated and the systems used to check and record pupil progress and monitor the quality of teaching were considered. A brief tour of the school was undertaken and a small number of books were looked at.

Context

There have been no changes to the school or the governing body since the inspection in January 2013.

Main findings

The school has started to tackle the areas identified as requiring improvement with enthusiasm and rigour. The way in which pupil progress is measured has been revised and a clearer picture of attainment on entry and individual achievement is emerging. Class teachers are becoming increasingly skilled and confident at assessing the levels pupils are working at. The data gathered is discussed and moderated within school to check the accuracy of their work. Those pupils who are capable of attaining levels above age related expectations are clearly identified and receive extra support to help them progress at a faster rate. Lesson objectives are identified with greater clarity and targets for pupils are precise. By introducing a consistent approach to the marking of work, pupils have a clearer understanding of what their next step is to improve their learning and reach a higher level. Subject leaders are receiving well targeted support, which is enabling them to develop the skills needed to carry out their roles and responsibilities. They demonstrate a secure understanding of the link between the quality of teaching and pupil achievement. Governors have taken rapid action to improve the way in which they hold the school to account. They have requested an external review of their role and have reorganised their committee structure to ensure that there is a consistent focus on school improvement. Minutes of recent meetings show that members of the governing body have gained confidence in challenging school leaders. A policy of making regular visits into classrooms has been well-received by subject leaders and, by becoming more familiar with progress data, governors have a greater understanding of pupil achievement.

The school improvement plan includes all aspects from the recent inspection that were judged to require improvement. The plan is clearly laid out, making it very apparent how the actions planned will be monitored and evaluated.

To implement the improvement plan, senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas identified as requiring improvement. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- Strengthen the new system for checking pupil progress by working with local infant schools to develop a shared approach to using a wide range of evidence to assess pupils' work.

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

External support

The National Leader of Education is providing well-measured guidance and training for the teaching staff. By using the expertise of specialist mathematics staff from the local secondary school, the more able pupils are making faster progress in this subject and are attaining higher levels. Specific training from an independent

consultant has successfully raised the profile of the governing body and the findings of the forthcoming review are to be used to identify further training needs and requirements. The termly meeting with a representative of the local authority ensure that the improvements planned remain focused and are having the appropriate impact on pupil progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector