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Jonathan Cooke
Headteacher
St Helen's Church of England Primary School
Greenhill
Bristol
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Dear Mr Cooke

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to St Helen's Church of England Primary School, South Gloucestershire

Following my visit to your school on 22 April 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, the deputy headteacher, five members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school's action plan was evaluated.

Context

Following the inspection in January 2013, a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed.

Main findings

- The school's action plan covers all of the improvement points in the inspection report. Challenging targets are set for improved achievement, although these need to indicate more clearly what proportion of pupils will make more than expected progress. Targets for specific groups of pupils also need to be clearer.
- While it is clear that improvements in pupils' achievement underpin all of the planned actions, including those to improve the quality of teaching, the success criteria are not explicit enough about the impact on pupils' progress. However, it is clear that the school now fully understands that to become at least good it needs to improve the progress made by pupils, particularly in mathematics.
- Some actions were already planned before the inspection; for example, the headteacher and governors were aware that some pupils' progress in mathematics was not good enough and had planned actions to deal with this. However, since the inspection the pace of change has speeded up. Clear priorities have been established and care is being taken to ensure that the improvements made will become embedded and long-lasting.
- The school's raising achievement plan is displayed on the staff room wall. It shows weekly what is planned and what has been done. All staff regularly review and update the plan. This approach is highly effective in ensuring that everyone is clear about what needs to be done and about their role in securing this improvement.
- A new tracking system is being introduced that is intended to provide the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and class teachers with much closer monitoring of each pupil's progress and achievement. The planning and development of this system is being led well by the deputy headteacher. Careful attention is being given to ensuring that teachers' assessments are accurate and reliable. Frequent reviews of individual pupils' and class progress are designed well to identify any support and interventions required.
- The headteacher has identified precisely the aspects of teaching that need to be improved or to be more consistently good. To bring about this improvement, the school has well-focused professional development across the school and for individual teachers. Curriculum leaders are being provided with good-quality targeted support that is helping to strengthen their leadership and monitoring role.
- The school's arrangements for the performance management of teachers are helpfully linked to the Teachers' Standards. Teachers are set appropriately

challenging targets for increasing pupils' achievement and have good links to the teacher's professional development.

- The school's governors have responded well to the inspection report. They now clearly recognise what the school needs to do to improve. They have undertaken a robust self-evaluation and skills audit, prior to the local authority undertaking a review of governance. Governors have already undertaken training to help them provide a better balance of support and challenge for the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders.

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:

- sharpen the action plan by making the links between the actions to be taken and the impact on raising pupils' achievement clearer.

Following the visit to the school, HMI recommends that:

- the school (as far as possible: the headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors) attends an Ofsted 'Getting to good' seminar
- a further monitoring visit should focus on observations of lessons undertaken with senior and/or curriculum leaders.

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

External support

The local authority is providing extensive support and very close monitoring of the school's progress. Links with outstanding schools within the authority are being used well to support the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the governing body with a clear focus on strategies to improve pupils' achievement. This has helped the school to introduce a more rigorous system for tracking pupils' progress. The local authority is part-funding an advanced skills teacher to work in the school for one day each week to provide targeted support and professional development for teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for South Gloucestershire and the Director of Education for Bristol Diocese. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector