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Mr Tim Coleman
Headteacher
St Hilda's CofE Primary School
Warwick Road South
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M16 0EX

Dear Mr Coleman

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St Hilda's CofE Primary School, Trafford

Following my visit to your school on 30 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 March. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with yourself and deputy headteacher, three members of the governing body including the Chair and a group of pupils. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority. The school's development plan, the local authorities support and challenge plan and monitoring reports and the school's professional development records alongside current progress and attainment data were also evaluated.

Context

A teacher on a temporary contract has left the school and a teacher with specific responsibility for developing information and communication technology (ICT) has, very recently, joined the staff on a permanent basis.

Main findings

A short-term development plan has been put in place and this provides a range of approaches which are intended to address the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. There is an especially strong focus on improving the progress of pupils in mathematics and this includes developing teacher's subject knowledge. There is a wide

range of actions identified in the plan. However, these are often broad and generic and focus on the whole school rather than on areas of weakness in teaching in specific classes. There are also too many strategies to action before the summer and there is a danger that time and energy may be dissipated rather than concentrated on necessary change. Equally, performance management targets are not linked sharply enough to improvements in teaching quality. Apart from a training session provided by the local authority on generic teaching approaches, little has been achieved in terms of moving the school forward. Internal sharing of good practice in mathematics is scheduled to start after the SATs tests. This is an unnecessary delay which has compounded the lack of progress towards improving practice and outcomes for pupils. Pupils did comment that little appears to have changed since the inspection.

The current senior leadership team is too large and unwieldy; individual responsibilities are not sufficiently well focussed on the key weaknesses which need addressing. For example, 'thinking actively in a social context' is a current initiative which the school has been promoting; this may be a laudable ideal but currently there are more pressing issues which need to be addressed. Several possible links to local schools where practice has been judged to be effective have been mooted but, as yet, have not been established. This includes involvement in the improving teacher programme for several teachers in the school whose practice has been identified as requiring improvement. There is also a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders which inhibits their effectiveness. For example, currently there is no one with responsibility for science. The development plan identifies the need to establish clarity in the middle management structure, but does not indicate how to make these managers effective.

Governors are aware of these issues and are keen to offer support and challenge as appropriate. They have identified the need to be more involved in the monitoring of teachers' performance management and its link to improved classroom performance and pay scale progression. This issue has very recently been incorporated into the action plan. More regular achievement review meetings are also planned to monitor impact on standards and improvements in the classroom. The post-Ofsted plan is to be reviewed at the end of the summer term by which time the picture regarding the stability of staffing should be a lot clearer. Currently, although there are many good intentions, the pace at which improvements are being implemented is too slow and lacks urgency.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- amend the development plan to focus on a smaller number of achievable actions which can be implemented immediately and to good effect to improve teaching in the classrooms
- access additional support to develop practice in areas of the school identified as in need of improvement, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and lower school.
- link with successful local schools to provide mentoring and sharing of good practice in order to develop leadership skills across the school and improve teaching
- restructure management responsibilities in line with the improvements needed and identified in the inspection; there is a need to ensure there is clarity in what individuals are responsible for and that outcomes are linked to clear performance management targets

- ensure that progress is monitored by senior leaders, with the help of the local authority, on a regular basis and that the review in June informs future actions in the subsequent revision of the action plan.

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

External support

The local authority has maintained regular contact with the school through termly monitoring visits. The inspection has led to more frequent contact and support. Guidance has been provided to inform the post-Ofsted action plan and link this with specific support from the local authority. There is a commitment to provide extensive training, advice, monitoring and brokered support. An inset session to raise awareness of strategies to improve teaching and learning has already been delivered. In addition, a range of brokered support from local schools has been planned for, but not yet arranged. The local authority has also agreed to regularly monitor and assess the progress being achieved prior to the next visit from Her Majesty's Inspector.

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

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

Her Majesty's Inspector