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Mr Simon Marriott
Headteacher
St Martin's Church of England Primary School
Spring Hill
Worle
Weston-Super-Mare
BS22 9BQ

Dear Mr Marriott

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Martin's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, a middle leader, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated.

Main findings

You have continued to work hard to increase the proportion of good teaching. The school's action plan is well-ordered and focussed on the key areas for improvement. The use of a colour code helps you and others to see when the actions taken have met the success criteria within the planned time scale. We discussed how it could be refined further with more frequent quantifiable milestones for those actions which will be on-going.

As you know the amount of formal monitoring undertaken by senior leaders has been doubled to six times a year. Also, through the new six weekly booster and intervention programmes standards in reading and writing are improving more rapidly. Class teachers now have a greater focus on the progress that pupils are making based on their starting points in Year 2. This is raising staffs' expectations and helping to ensure that lesson planning has improved.

You rightly see the further professional development of staff through training and coaching as essential to raising pupils' attainment. The follow-up work from the phonics training undertaken last term, along with the use of modern tablet technology, has improved pupils' communication skills. This is demonstrated by 42 out of 45, Year 5 pupils now being back on track with their challenging reading targets. The 'Developing Teacher Programme' has been successfully used by all staff to reflect on their own teaching based on video footage of their lessons and peer coaching. Through this they have identified their own next steps to improve their teaching. This is raising the quality of teaching as recorded by subsequent observations by you and other senior staff. We agreed that to raise teachers' aspirations still further they need to witness more outstanding teaching.

The quality of middle leadership for English and mathematics has continued to improve since the last inspection. Both of these subject leaders are now the principal monitors for their subject, rather than just supporting you and your senior leaders, and they are helping to secure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. They are now undertaking lesson observations, work scrutiny and evaluating lesson planning without support. They are feeding their findings back to colleagues and ensuring that lesson planning and activities are being adapted more regularly and are better meeting the needs of all pupils. They have helped to identify, class, year group and whole school trends. This means that the staff are not now wholly reliant on senior leaders to identify and resolve areas of weakness.. We agreed that the next steps for these leaders will be to measure literacy and numeracy work across the curriculum and to see outstanding middle leadership work.

The governing body is being provided with better quality data, which they are using to analyse the school's performance. They are aligning a number of committee meetings to the six annual formal monitoring meetings held by you. Most recently they have benefited from the addition of two new parent governors. Training has been undertaken and further is planned. The governing body is in the process of producing a self-evaluation and skills audit. They are also in the process of allocating individual governors to report to the whole governing body about different subject areas. They need to ensure that these developments are completed swiftly and that that these changes can demonstrate a positive impact on school improvement before the end of the term. We agreed that, with external help, the governors would visit other schools to see outstanding governance practice.

External support

The school has secured good quality external support. Good use is made of the 'Learning Exchange', which is a support, advisory and professional team provided by North Somerset Local Authority. Through this service the school has accessed a good range of professional development programmes for staff including, Improving Schools, Developing Teacher, and Critical Skills. The local authority regularly audits the progress that the school is making and you find them challenging and supportive. Strong relationships with the other two schools in the Worle area enable good collaboration work. For example, the smoother transfer of pupils from Year 3 to Year 4, sharing best practice and joint training of staff.

Senior leaders, governors and the responsible authority are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- provide teachers and the governing body with first-hand experiences of outstanding practice.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector