

PROTECT-INSPECTION

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Angela Wallace and Amanda Staiano
Co-headteachers
St Catherine's Hoddesdon CofE Primary School
Haslewood Avenue
Hoddesdon
EN11 8HT

Dear Ms Wallace, Ms Staiano

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Catherine's Hoddesdon CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 June 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 6 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During my visit, I met with you and visited classrooms together to observe phonics, and guided reading lessons. I met with four members of the governing body, four middle leaders and a representative from the local authority. I looked at school documents including improvement plans and records of monitoring activities.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection one teacher has returned from maternity leave and one is currently on maternity leave and is being covered by a temporary teacher. Two new governors have joined the governing body.

Main findings

The English leader has trained teachers and teaching assistants to deliver phonics lessons more effectively. This has had a positive impact, staff now teach the sounds letters represent accurately and pupils are making better progress. Staff in the Reception classes have received support and training from the local authority to improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and this has been effective. The co-headteachers have made sensible decisions to re-arrange staffing for September 2013 in order to ensure that teachers have the expertise to make further improvements. Various activities are taking place to ensure that teachers can confidently assess pupils' progress but leaders do not check these assessments to ensure that all achievement data is accurate.

The headteachers have set clearer and higher expectations for role of middle leaders who include phase and subject leaders. These developing leaders now take a more active role in evaluating and monitoring progress. They have held progress meetings to hold teachers to account for pupil progress and to ensure they can have a clearer view of the achievement of pupils in their area of responsibility. They are developing confidence and learning new skills.

All leaders track pupils' progress and attainment more systematically and use this information to provide catch-up lessons for those that are falling behind. They are monitoring vulnerable groups more successfully including those known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. Leaders have identified pupils who are new to learning to speak English who are not making enough progress in some year groups. Teachers are now beginning to plan more appropriate work for these groups, to help them catch up.

School improvement plans include all of the areas for improvement from the section 5 inspection. However, governors are not aided in judging effectiveness because some of the success criteria lack clarity. Furthermore, deadlines are not clear enough for when leaders and managers should complete monitoring activities.

Senior leaders monitor the teaching and learning by observing lessons. However, feedback to teachers does not focus well enough on the progress pupils make in lessons. Leaders do not follow up development targets through to subsequent observations to ensure that matters improve quickly. There are no individual training and development plans for teaching that requires improvement. Leaders are not yet using a range of evidence, including progress in books, data and evidence from lesson observations, to gain an accurate view of teaching over time

In their classrooms, pupils are polite and friendly. They have positive attitudes to their learning. Some classrooms are not well-ordered or stimulating learning environments. Staff do not always teach handwriting well enough and consequently the presentation of pupils' work is too variable. Teachers' expectations in some areas of learning are not high enough, for example of the independent work pupils complete during guided reading lessons.

The local authority have trained governors to analyse data more rigorously. They have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are able to ask challenging questions and have identified that some targets in the school's improvement plans that are not helpful in showing them how well the school is improving. Governors and school leaders are working more closely with parents including to seek their views regularly.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- Improve the impact of monitoring activities to ensure that teachers receive clear targets for improvement which focus on improving the achievement of pupils
- Use a range of monitoring evidence to gain an accurate view of teaching overtime across a range of subjects so that appropriate training can be provided
- Set consistently clear and high expectations for the quality of teaching across all subjects and for the quality of learning environments
- Sharpen improvement plans by making success criteria more easily measureable and include tight deadlines for when monitoring activities should take place.

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

External support

The local authority training and guidance for Early Years Foundation Stage staff has been effective in improving provision. Subject leaders have benefited from training support to improve their effectiveness. The leader for special educational needs has also received training to improve how support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is targeted and planned. This work is on-going.

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

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector

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The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- The academy chain where relevant
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.
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