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3 July 2013

Mrs Colleen Gibson
Headteacher
Crigglestone St James Church of England Primary Academy
St James Way
Wakefield
West Yorkshire
WF4 3HY

Dear Mrs Gibson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Crigglestone St James Church of England Primary Academy, Wakefield

Following my visit to your school on 2 July 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 academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 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, staff, pupils, members of the Governing Body and representatives of the local authority. I also spoke with another representative of the local authority prior to the visit. I evaluated the academy's improvement plan and had a tour of the academy with three, Year 6 pupils. I scrutinised a range of documents including data from the tracking of pupils' progress and the report produced following the external review of governance.

Context

Two teachers will leave the school at the end of the summer term. These class teacher vacancies will be taken-up by existing senior leaders.

Main findings

You, other leaders, governors and staff were deeply disappointed with the outcome of the inspection and feel that you do not recognise the academy from the report. Responses from many parents also reflected this view. Nevertheless, you and your team of staff, along with governors are determined to address the areas for improvement identified and are taking swift and effective action to do so. Your post-Ofsted action plan is detailed with clear milestones and success criteria. Targets for 2014 are significantly higher than those for 2013 and these set a demanding trajectory for improvements in achievement. Improvements to systems to track pupil progress are enabling you to hold more robust professional discussions with class teachers. Expertise within the academy is being used well to help individual teachers improve their practice and you feel there are early signs that this is having an impact on the quality of teachers' planning and the learning environment.

The pupils who showed me around the school talked enthusiastically of the range activities that the school offers. They were clearly looking forward to the fair on Friday which is part of activities to celebrate it is 150 years since the school opened. In lessons, many pupils were busily solving mathematical problems related to the event. Pupils who met with me reported that 'self-improvement time' to respond to marking and teacher comments at the start of lessons is making a positive difference to their learning.

Pupils also appreciate the new, themed reading corners for each class and the daily opportunities for independent reading time. They feel this development is helping them to read more widely and frequently. Staff confirmed that other strategies, such as the buddy reading you are trialling, involving Year 1 and Year 5 pupils, is already increasing pupils' enjoyment of, and confidence in reading in both year groups.

The range of staff development sessions delivered by your leadership team have focused sharply on improving aspects of practice identified as less effective during the inspection. Staff interviewed felt these have been beneficial in helping them to reflect and improve their approaches to teaching and their use questioning. Staff also noted how their planning for topics is focussing more sharply on the literacy and numeracy skills that will be practised alongside the subject skills and knowledge pupils will learn. Your leadership team's monitoring and evaluation have identified that learning environments are being used more effectively to encourage pupils to be independent learners. Teachers feel pupils are responding positively to increasing degrees of challenge in lessons.

The external review of governance has been completed and recommendations for how this aspect of leadership and management can be improved are clear. The review is still to be discussed in detail at a full governing body meeting but governors rightly recognise that expectations of governance have changed significantly and that training and development will be needed to meet these increased demands.

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

- take swift action to respond to the findings of the review of governance
- ensure that information is clearly presented to governors so they can monitor the academy's progress towards 'good' effectively.

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

You make good use of your service level agreement with the local authority to support academy monitoring and evaluation on a termly basis. Additional work with the local authority since the inspection has usefully confirmed the accuracy of your judgements of teaching quality. The review commissioned by the school through the local authority governor service team has provided a detailed evaluation of current strengths and areas for development. The opportunity to access bespoke support to address the reviews' findings is a useful resource.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and as below.

Yours sincerely

Katrina Gueli

Her Majesty's Inspector

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.