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20 September 2013

Ms Sonia Sharma
St Andrew's Church of England Primary School
Coleman Street
Whitmore Reans
WV6 0RH

Dear Ms Sharma

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

Following my visit to your school on 19 September 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- immediately strengthen the senior leadership team by drawing on the additional support offered by the local authority
- clarify roles and responsibilities for the coordination of English as an additional language
- ensure that pupils are making rapid progress in mathematics
- make sure pupils in Key Stage 2 have a wider range of subjects to study.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, pupils, a member of the governing body and a representative of the local authority or to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. It was not possible to meet either the Chair or the Vice Chair of the Governing Body during the visit.

Context

Since the last inspection the headteacher, who had been absent due to illness since October 2012, has left. The deputy headteacher, who had been acting headteacher was appointed as substantive headteacher one week before this monitoring visit. The Chair of the Governing Body stood down in July 2013 and a new Chair is in place. There is currently a vacancy for the deputy headteacher post. All of the roles of the other senior leaders were redefined from September 2013.

Main findings

As acting, and now substantive, headteacher you have shown the drive and energy needed to tackle a number of shortcomings identified within the school. You have rightly recognised the need for senior leaders to have responsibilities where they can be held account for their performance. Consequently each of them now has a clear role which you are monitoring. However, in the absence of a deputy headteacher too much leadership responsibility falls on your shoulders.

The governors are acutely aware that they have not challenged senior leaders over the performance of the school. Since the inspection, they have received better information, which along with a series of planned visits has given them a clearer picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The committee structure is being reorganised to focus on achievement and teaching and learning. Link governor roles are in place. Governors recognise their inexperience and their need for further training.

You have recognised that too much teaching requires improvement and some is inadequate. Your capacity to support individual teachers in the past year has been limited by the need for you to take on the acting headteacher role. You lead regular pupil progress meetings which challenge those teachers where pupils are not making enough progress to take action to close the attainment gap. The confusing colour coding of data is not clear enough to show leaders and governors where the gaps are in progress and attainment. The action plan has specific targets and is clearly focussed on raising achievement but does not have sufficient milestones to show how well the school is meeting its challenging targets.

The introduction of a structured phonics programme in Key Stage 2 has led to rapid improvements in progress in reading in a short space of time but this has not been replicated to the same extent in writing, or in mathematics where progress, is still too slow. Pupils learning English as an additional language are not making as much progress as their peers nationally and coordination for this work is at present unclear.

Pupils report that although they enjoy their lessons and have very positive attitudes towards their teachers, the range of subjects they study is too narrow. The drive to

raise standards in English and mathematics is mainly through additional literacy and numeracy lessons. Older pupils are missing out on wider opportunities in languages and music for example.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I was unable to meet with the Chair or Vice Chair of the governing body or with other senior leaders. Given the extent of the measures needed to be taken to bring about improvements I intend to return to the school as soon as is possible to review the progress being made.

External support

The local authority has been active in its support and held regular reviews of the school's performance. A further review of the school and the governing body is shortly to be carried out. The local authority recognises that the current senior leadership needs to be strengthened until a deputy can be appointed. Steps have already been taken to work with local link schools to support the headteacher and the Governing Body.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector