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19 September 2013

Hannah Walters
Platt Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
St Mary's Platt
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN15 8JY

Dear Mrs Walters

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Platt Church of England Voluntary Aided 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 incisive and urgent action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Leaders should take further action to:

- ensure that staff sustain the rapid pace of change by using the improvement plan to keep them focused on the key priorities for improvement, the deadlines and the achievement targets against which success will be measured.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and other

documentation. You took me on a helpful tour of the school, enabling me to speak to pupils and observe them at work.

Context

At the time of the inspection, governors had just completed a recruitment process to appoint a substantive headteacher. You were successfully appointed and took up position this September. Two 'interim' headteachers, who had shared the leadership of the school on a temporary basis, are no longer in post.

Evidence

Prior to the section 5 inspection, the interim headteachers had initiated a programme of monitoring and support, designed to improve the quality of teaching. Whilst judicious and necessary, this strategy was not timely enough to raise overall achievement. In the light of the inspection findings, the programme was strengthened during the summer term. The process was rigorous. It involved target setting for the teachers concerned, formal lesson observations, feedback and review. Staff response to the approach was positive and leaders noted improvements in the teaching that hitherto had consistently required improvement.

Since joining the school in September you have been determined to build on the 'forward momentum' already initiated. The local authority has been supportive and has funded three teacher placements on an intensive coaching programme, 'Every lesson counts', designed to support staff to improve their practice to consistently good or better.

Expectations with regard to pupils' attainment in each year group have been correctly raised. In particular, teachers' awareness of the need to ensure that teaching moves pupils rapidly from their starting points, so that they make at least good progress in all lessons, have been made explicit for all staff, including other adults. There is an appropriate and targeted programme of training and development scheduled to take place across the year and teachers are motivated to play their part in moving the school to good. You have reviewed the school's improvement plans and made sensible adjustments. The plan covers all the necessary areas for improvement with appropriately challenging targets and clear measures of success.

Recognising the importance of appointing a high quality headteacher, the governing body has been bold on its journey to secure a permanent appointment. This has involved not appointing on two occasions and making use of temporary post-holders. Throughout the period, governors made astute use of sound local authority advice. The Chair of the Governing body provides strong leadership and recognises the need for rapid improvement. Shrewd proposals to strengthen the leadership of the school further through re-structuring are already being considered.

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 has provided very good support. Excellent communication and timely interventions have ensured that the periods during which the school was temporarily led and the summer term after the section 5 inspection took place, were not wasted. A local authority advisor visits the school regularly and has provided valuable training, particularly for the governing body, for example on interpreting assessment information. This has meant that governors are secure in their understanding of what needs to improve and why.

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

Yours sincerely

Lesley Farmer
Her Majesty's Inspector