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9 October 2013

Mrs Jo Heaton
Headteacher
St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
North Lane
Elwick
Hartlepool
TS27 3EG

Dear Mrs Heaton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Hartlepool

Following my visit to your school on 8 October 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 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 urgent and effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure targets for pupils entitled to the pupil premium and boys are included within teachers' performance management plans to make sure they are held to account fully for the progress such pupils make in lessons.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the assistant headteacher, two middle managers, three representatives of the governing body, the Assistant Director for Education from Newcastle and Durham Diocese and a representative from Hartlepool Local Authority's Education Service. I observed two part-lessons with you and reviewed a number of documents, including the school's improvement plan, recent records on the quality of teaching and reports to the governing body since the inspection. I also looked closely at pupils English and mathematics books in the lessons we observed together.

Context

Since the inspection a new assistant headteacher has been appointed to work across the

federation of St Peter's and Hart primary schools. A member of staff has gone on sickness leave and teaching staff responsibilities have been reorganised to minimise any potential disruption to pupils learning in Key Stage 1. The governing body has developed a raising achievement sub-committee to focus more closely on pupil's progress and achievements across the school. Members of this committee are part of a monthly Ofsted Monitoring Group with senior staff in the school and representatives from both the Local Authority and Diocese.

Main findings

Actions taken since the inspection have been decisive and appropriate. You quickly harnessed the energies of staff and governors to drive improvements quickly. Rapid changes to teachers' performance management arrangements, alongside half-termly pupil progress meetings, has resulted in a much clearer focus on the achievements of pupils in lessons and in holding teachers to account for the progress of different groups. Targets for pupils, including pupils with a disability or special educational needs and more able pupils are checked regularly to make sure that any one at risk of falling behind is being quickly supported to improve. Targets for the small number of pupils entitled to the pupil premium and boys, a group you have identified that could do better, are not yet identified within teachers' performance plans.

Teachers have benefited from a wide range of training to improve the quality of teaching, marking and feedback to pupils. They have had a number of opportunities to observe good and outstanding teaching in schools across the town. More training is planned for this term. Your reports on lessons you and the assistant headteacher have observed and evidence from the lessons we observed together show the training is making a positive difference to the proportion of good or better teaching in school. You know there is still some way to go to meet your target of 100% lessons to be good or better by summer 2014. Effective, clear, time-limited support plans have been drawn up for teachers whose teaching still requires improvement and the impact of the support provided will be reviewed at the end of this half term. Improved systems to check and report regularly on pupils' progress are in place and already providing better information on how well pupils are doing in class. Teachers' whose teaching requires improvement are not using this information to plan activities to move pupils on from their different starting points well enough yet. You and your middle leaders are working with these staff to ensure a consistent approach across school.

Middle leaders have been given much more responsibility to drive the improvements required and have been advised and supported by advisers from the local authority effectively. Middle leaders speak confidently about how they value their wider responsibilities and how they are now held to account more rigorously by yourself and governors for their roles in improving teaching and in hastening pupils' progress. They are fully involved in checking teachers planning to ensure a consistent approach and in monitoring pupils' progress in books, the quality of marking and in tracking progress of pupils in their subject areas.

External Support

The support from the Diocese and Local Authority has been timely, welcomed by you and is helping you to make a positive difference to the quality of teaching and leadership and

management in the school. Their brokering of support from good and outstanding local schools such as Stranton Academy and Greatham Church of England primary and the wider family of schools in Hartlepool has been particularly valued. The Diocese and the Local Authority share the role of chairing the meetings with the Ofsted Monitoring group in order to have a joint understanding of the progress you are making. They are providing effective, consistent challenge as well as support to you and the governing body in your collective drive to ensure the school becomes a good school within the year.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. Consequently we have agreed that I will return in the spring term to check the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow
Her Majesty's Inspector