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Jo Hester
St John's Church of England School Stanmore
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Dear Mrs Hester

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St John's Church of England School Stanmore

Following my visit to your school on 19 November 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:

- ensure that pupil performance data is used
 - in lesson plans by teachers
 - to determine the focus of monitoring activity by leaders
- ensure that the marking and assessment policy is implemented consistently
- ensure governors' monitoring and evaluation strategies reflect current priorities in the school improvement plan

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, members of the Governing Body, representatives of the local authority and the London Diocesan Board to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated school improvement action plans, achievement data, a sample of pupils' work and records

of governing body meetings. I visited all classes on a tour of the school with you and the deputy headteacher.

Context

Since the last inspection the leadership team has been restructured to include a new deputy headteacher, two new assistant headteachers, a special needs co-ordinator, two new subject leaders for English and mathematics. Staff turnover is high; long term agency staff cover two teachers on sick leave, two classes for maternity leave and there is one newly qualified teacher. Seven members of the governing body are new.

Main findings

The new leadership team have defined roles and responsibilities and there is now a greater capacity to drive change in school expectations. School leaders have analysed pupil achievement and acknowledge that improving reading, writing and increasing pupil progress remain key priorities. The school action plan is detailed and specific, it identifies how improvements in these areas will be monitored and evaluated. It has been shared with staff and governors who are clear about current priorities.

The headteacher is determined that pupil progress will improve more rapidly. A new pupil tracking system has been introduced. Leaders use this information to form an overview of standards in English and mathematics. They recognise that this data could be used more precisely to focus their monitoring activity when less than good progress is evident for pupil groups. Pupil targets are more challenging as a result of the new data systems. This has raised expectations by teachers of what pupils can achieve. The introduction of half-termly pupil progress meetings has ensured a strong focus by teachers and leaders on improving outcomes for all pupils. Leaders monitor planning weekly. The planning format has changed and it now identifies learning to meet pupils' abilities more closely. The use of performance data however, does not yet feature strongly enough on plans or in assessment to ensure all pupils make the best progress in every lesson. Pupils' books show variation in the quality of marking. In some cases, particularly in upper key stage two, progress in writing is evident because feedback makes clear to pupils how to improve their work. In other books, particularly in mathematics, this is not routine and work for pupils is too easy or too difficult because marking is unhelpful. Imminent staff training is planned to support teachers implementing the new marking and assessment policy.

There is a sharper focus on teaching and learning. Teachers are clearer about what makes successful learning because their classes are visited more frequently. Since the beginning of term all teachers have been observed by school leaders or external advisers. All staff receive written feedback. Strengths in practice are recognised, where improvements are needed this is identified and action is taken. The quality of

teaching is beginning to improve as a result. Additional adults benefit from professional development to improve their skills. The new special needs co-ordinator is managing their time more efficiently in lessons and group work.

The chair and vice chair of governors are committed to rapid school improvement. They acknowledge that they can learn from past weaknesses in holding school leaders to account for sustained improvement. Governors are keen to develop a more challenging partnership with school leaders, experienced governors feel confident to ask searching questions about pupil progress. There are seven new governors receiving induction into their new role. All governors have completed a skills audit to help them contribute effectively in newly formed committees. Governors visit the school regularly but these visits lack a clear focus to provide evidence about how successfully key priorities are addressed.

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 school has received effective support since the inspection. The local authority adviser visits regularly to monitor teaching and to support and challenge the headteacher. Curriculum consultants work closely with leaders in special needs, mathematics, early years and spelling. Diocesan advisers have prioritised improving leadership accountability, school improvement planning, the use of pupil performance data and self-evaluation. The high level of additional support has enabled staff to develop their skills and this has had an impact on improving the quality of teaching and leadership in school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Harrow and the Diocese of London.

Yours sincerely

Ann Debono
Her Majesty's Inspector