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11 December 2013

Mrs Kathryn Ellidge
Headteacher
Nelson St Philip's Church of England Primary School
Leeds Road
Nelson
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BB9 9TQ

Dear Mrs Ellidge

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Nelson St Philip's Church of England Primary School, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 10 December 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 October 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:

- identify mid-year expectations in the action plan so Governors can check the plan is working.

Evidence

During the visit meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, three representatives of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's action plan and other documentation regarding school self-evaluation and improvement were evaluated. I visited every class in the school twice during the day to see teaching and the impact of actions.

Context

There have been no contextual changes since the last inspection.

Main findings

You, your senior leaders and governors accept the outcomes of the last inspection and have taken immediate actions to address the areas for improvement. Your action plan identifies appropriate actions linked to the last inspection and those who are accountable for them. However, the plan should be further improved by refining the 'expectations and milestones' so governors can check the plan is working.

Improvements I saw in the way pupils' use of vocabulary and in the quality of their writing result from actions taken by the English subject leader. Revisions of the speaking, writing and reading policies increase the importance teachers place on the good use of vocabulary in spoken and written work and improve outcomes for pupils.

Marking is improving, particularly in English, because you set clear expectations of how teachers should mark work. However, further challenge is still required to ensure marking consistently meets your expectations in all subjects, particularly in mathematics.

There are more opportunities for pupils to work independently since the inspection. Questions and extra challenges are now common on displays and in classrooms. Activities that allow pupils to work on their own for sustained periods of time are being used well by staff to improve independent learning. Additionally, you have organized training for teachers from a group of local educational psychologists. This will increase teachers' knowledge of different strategies that help pupils to develop their independent learning skills. Though, it is too early yet to judge the impact of the training on pupil progress.

Senior leaders have a much better understanding of how pupils are improving because of better use of data. Increased frequency and rigour of how English and mathematics subject leaders check performance in their subjects has led to pupils' standards improving at a faster pace, particularly in writing and for groups of more able pupils. Increased detail in feedback given to staff on how they can improve has led to improvements in teaching.

Improving leadership of all subjects is a priority in your plans. You have quickly established links with other local schools and are using these links well to allow teachers to learn from good practice regarding teaching and subject leadership. Forthcoming changes in staffing have resulted in the appropriate delay of some training relating to subject leadership. Next term this training must be implemented with new staff as soon as possible to ensure you maintain the accelerated pace of improvement since the inspection.

Governors continue to take a keen interest in how the school is improving. After the inspection they quickly established a Standards and Effectiveness Committee which meets frequently to hold senior leaders to account. They have sharpened their focus on monitoring the impact of actions and sought appropriate training to help them probe more deeply. Governors now acknowledge that they must improve the formality of their checking.

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 continues to be supported well by the Local Authority through visits from its Advisor and members of the Monitoring and Intervention Team. This is now predominantly focussed on developing the sustained capacity of middle leadership.

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

Yours sincerely

John Nixon

Her Majesty's Inspector