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18 December 2013

Mrs Sue Pennington
Headteacher
Clayton-le-Woods Church of England Primary School
Back Lane
Clayton-le-Woods
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Lancashire
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Dear Mrs Pennington

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Clayton-le-Woods Church of England Primary School, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 17 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:

- confirm how the success of planned improvements will be evaluated and how all leaders and governors will contribute to this evaluation.
- allow pupils to respond more fully to teachers' comments on their work.

Evidence

Meetings were held with you, subject leaders for English and mathematics, pupils, members of the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority. A telephone conversation was held with the Chair of Governors. The school's improvement plan and other documents were evaluated. Samples of Year 2, 5 and 6 pupils' work were reviewed. Classrooms and corridors were visited.

Context

One teacher is on long term absence and one teacher has resigned. A teacher has been promoted to have responsibility for leading English.

Main findings

Teaching is improving. Teachers are providing more challenge at the start of lessons. They clearly explain to pupils what learning is expected and then use sharper introductions to activities. Time has been allocated each day to teach and then practise Year 5 and 6 pupils' problem solving skills in mathematics. This has led to increased achievement. The new approach to problem solving will be used with all pupils from January. Clearly presented displays of key words and prompts in classrooms help pupils to improve their work. Pupils are encouraged to refer to the displays as needed which supports their independence. Information on different levels of achievement and pupils' work is attractively displayed in corridors and other areas. This helps pupils understand what is expected of them. Pupils confirm that they read the information and that this lets them know what their targets should be. In Reception, the spaces used for different learning activities are now more attractive and stimulating.

The quality of marking remains variable. Even where there is stronger practice, opportunities to use feedback to extend learning are not used as well as possible. Some inaccuracies in pupils' responses are not picked up and teachers' use of English is poor on occasions.

Actions have been taken to increase achievement. The role of English leader has been enhanced and plans to develop grammar, spelling and punctuation are starting to be implemented. The sessions where younger children learn letters and sounds have been reorganised to ensure that children's work matches their levels of knowledge and understanding. Teachers and teaching assistants have been trained to ensure they are more effective in these sessions. The school's records indicate that achievement is increasing in most years. Progress is slower in Year 3. School leaders are closely monitoring pupils' achievement in that year to ensure that the effective teaching is leading to faster learning.

Staffing in the school is more stable than in the recent past. There is a shared vision and agreement on the priorities for improvement. Leaders are confident that the team approach will continue to lead to improvement as new teachers join the school. Middle leadership has been strengthened. Middle leaders' close working with senior leaders ensures that the developing approaches to improving teaching are becoming increasingly robust. Teachers are set high expectations and, if these are not met, supported to improve.

The school improvement plan is well structured and gives appropriate detail. It links actions to required improvements and shows clearly how these will be monitored. The details of how the impact of actions will be evaluated and who will do this are less clear. There is too much emphasis on the role of the headteacher in doing this. The plan has tight timescales for the first term although these are not stated for the rest of the year. The school intends that the longer term schedule will be confirmed as the impact of earlier development is reviewed.

The governing body provides strong challenge and support to the school. Governors wrote their own action plan following the inspection. This sets out a detailed schedule of actions to further increase the impact of governance. The plan gives a clear framework for governors to ensure that they build on their good understanding of the school and become more evaluative.

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 good support to the school. A consultant headteacher has provided longer term support in the recent past. This support has contributed strongly to the school's recent improvement. The diocese, the local authority and the school work in close and effective partnership. The school uses its local cluster of primary schools to ensure that its judgements on pupils' standards are accurate.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Interim Executive Director for Children & Young People for Lancashire and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Blackburn.

Yours sincerely

David Selby

Her Majesty's Inspector