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18 December 2013

Ms Caroline Phipps  
Headteacher  
The CofE School of St Edmund and St John  
Beechwood Road  
DY2 7QA

Dear Ms Phipps

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The CofE School of St Edmund and St John**

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 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 9 October 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- refine the school improvement plan to include more precise milestones and impact measures
- streamline and co-ordinate the different sources of external support to provide one strategic overview of improvement
- ensure that teachers develop their skills in using information about pupils' achievement in order to provide work which challenges pupils of different abilities
- establish clarity with the Diocese and the local authority about the future of the governing and act swiftly to strengthen governance.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with a group of pupils. A range of documentation was reviewed, including the school improvement plan and latest information about pupils' progress. During the day, you joined me on brief visits to classes to talk to pupils and review their work.

## **Context**

There have been no significant changes since the recent inspection which judged the school to require improvement.

## **Main findings**

You are fully aware of the amount of work that needs to be done to ensure that the school improves. Your school improvement plan identifies appropriate actions to improve the quality of teaching and the work of senior leaders. However, it does not indicate precise milestones or success criteria linked to pupils' progress and attainment. Consequently, governors cannot easily check on the extent to which actions have been successful.

The school is receiving support from several different sources. Your school improvement plan lacks a clear picture of how these different improvement activities will work together. Neither is there a clear and agreed overview of when the activities will be evaluated or who will be responsible for providing an external evaluation.

You and other senior leaders have set up programmes of training and support to improve the quality of teaching, particularly of mathematics. The local authority mathematics specialist is working with teachers to raise the quality of teaching in mathematics. It is too early to see the impact of this work. You have made links with a Teaching School and enrolled some teachers on improvement programmes. You have also organised supportive partnerships between teachers within the school to support planning and assessment. Your records indicate that there is less inadequate teaching. However, teaching is not improving quickly enough to make a rapid difference to pupils' achievement.

Leaders have introduced a new format for teachers to use when they plan mathematics lessons. Although this has heightened teachers' understanding of the need to plan activities which meet the needs of pupils' different abilities, their skills in using this information is not developing quickly enough. Your records indicate that there has been little improvement in ensuring that all pupils are provided with suitably challenging work and making fast enough progress.

You and other senior leaders have taken effective actions to improve attendance. Pupils' attendance so far this term has improved in comparison to the same period last year. Pupils are very aware of the recent improvements and they value the assemblies and certificates for good attendance.

The governing body has not yet undertaken the external review of governance as recommended in the previous inspection report. The Diocese and the local authority have different views about the future of the governing body. There is a lack of clarity about the way forward. This is hindering the school's improvement. Governors are not checking frequently enough that your actions and those of other senior leaders are helping pupils of different abilities make better progress in all classes and subjects.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

HMI would like to meet with the full governing body in February 2014.

### **External support**

The impact of the local authority has been limited. The review of governance, recommended in the recent inspection, has not been undertaken. The local authority has planned training for governance early in the Spring term. This action has not been urgent enough.

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

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**