

PROTECT-INSPECTION



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Mrs G Morrison
Headteacher
St Mary's Church of England Primary School
Yew Tree Road
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Dear Mrs Morrison

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 January 2014, 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 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:

- Develop links with an outstanding school to support improvements in leadership and management, in order to rapidly increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching.
- Devise a robust and sharply focused school improvement plan, linked to the areas for improvement following the last inspection. Involve staff and governors in the development of the plan to ensure greater understanding of the actions the school needs to take to bring about rapid improvement.

- Use the information the school has on the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils to plan the expected gains in pupils' achievement over time and include this in the school development plan
- Make sure the quality of pupils' learning in lessons is the key focus when judging the quality of teaching and rigorously follow up areas for improvement identified during lesson observations to ensure weaknesses in teaching are eradicated.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, the Chair of Governors and two other governors and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also had discussions with a group of pupils and held a brief meeting with staff. The school development plan was evaluated and I considered recent pupils' progress data. The deputy headteacher took me on a tour of the school and I briefly observed pupils in lessons. I also scrutinised the writing and mathematics books of pupils in Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6. I examined a range of documents including the outcome of monitoring activities and the impact of performance management on improving the quality of teaching.

Context

Following the inspection, one teacher has been on long-term absence through illness.

Main findings

Staff and governors were disappointed and aggrieved at the judgements made at the inspection. They have now accepted that there is a need to improve the quality of teaching and increase rates of progress for all groups of pupils. However, the actions following the inspection have not been taken urgently enough. Some inadequate teaching remains and guidance provided to teachers to improve their practice is not followed through with sufficient rigour. There is insufficient attention given to the quality of learning in lessons when judging the quality of teaching.

Senior leaders have a range of information on the attainment and progress of pupils, but the decisions made about what pupils need to do to address underachievement are not precise enough. They are not closely matched to the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, and the actions which are planned are not specific enough to rapidly increase rates of progress. Although some specific programmes of support are having a positive impact, in lessons, teachers do not identify clearly enough what pupils need to learn to close the gaps in pupils' attainment.

The governing body recognise that they need to have greater access to information on the quality of teaching and to understand the links between the quality of teaching and rates of pupils' progress. Although their understanding of pupils' progress data is developing, this is at an early stage because their access to this information has been relatively recent. Their involvement in school self-evaluation is limited and they, together with all staff are not sufficiently involved in developing the plans to swiftly drive school improvement. The external review of governance is underway, but has not yet been completed.

Pupils have a better understanding of what they are learning in lessons, because teachers share the objectives for learning, and help pupils to understand what successful learning will look like. Some training for teachers has taken place to increase the skills of teachers in planning lessons which are more closely matched to pupils' learning needs. However, the impact of this training has not been closely monitored by senior leaders. Teachers have been involved in staff meetings to focus on improving the quality of marking and feedback provided to pupils in books, but inspection evidence shows that inconsistencies in marking remain. Teachers do not always provide consistent guidance to support pupils to know what they should do to improve their work.

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

A new local authority officer began supporting the school in November 2013. A school review was carried out in January 2014. However, the local authority has not provided any training and support to improve the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. An external consultant has recently worked with the governing body to check their skills as part of the external review of governance.

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson
Her Majesty's Inspector