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Mrs Wendy Macallister
Headteacher
St Paul's Cray Church of England Primary School
Buttermere Road
Orpington
BR5 3WD

Dear Mrs Macallister

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

Following my visit to your school on 16 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 November 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 enhance the post-Ofsted school improvement plan by:

- indicating the timing and sequencing of the action and outlining how actions will be monitored by senior leaders, members of the governing body and others
- developing your approach to evaluating learning in lessons by focussing more on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress
- providing opportunities for staff to visit other schools to observe good and outstanding teaching.

Evidence

During the visit meetings were held with you, your deputy and assistant headteachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Chair of the Resources Committee. I spoke with the School Improvement Partner, representing the local

authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The post-Ofsted action plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was scrutinised including current pupil performance information and outcomes of monitoring activities undertaken by school leaders. We completed a learning walk visiting every classroom and I met a small group of Year 4 pupils to look at their work.

Context

Since the last inspection one teacher has joined the school as replacement for teacher who left at the end of December. A new teaching assistant is supporting pupils in Year 3. Additional leadership time for the deputy and assistant headteachers has been created. Collective worship has been moved to the end of the school day to make better use of mornings for teaching literacy and numeracy. There is currently a parent governor vacancy.

Main findings

Leaders have acted rapidly since the last inspection, taking staff with them. They have visited three schools and used the information from this to purchase a new handwriting scheme which was introduced at the start of this term. Pupils are positive about the new approach and proudly shared their handwriting with me and explained how the approach is beginning to help them develop their writing skills.

With the aim of improving the quality of teaching, you have considered the development needs of all teachers, and have put targeted support and coaching in place. For example, two teachers are now on a 'good to outstanding' programme. However, lesson observations focus relies on the quality of teaching seen in lessons and not the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress. In-school training is being undertaken and teachers are sharing good practice. The next step is for teachers to benefit from visits to other schools to observe good and outstanding teaching.

Evidence from books and school performance information shows that pupils' progress is improving. However, presentation of work still needs to be improved, with a particular focus on ensuring greater accuracy in spelling. Support for planning is helping teachers to target learning and deliver more engaging lessons. Nonetheless, teachers are not setting high enough expectations for what pupils can achieve within lessons. New and creative approaches to homework has enthused pupils, and is reflected in the displays of their work. You have also started to develop a new curriculum based on pupils' cross-curricular learning and is being trialled in Years 1 and 4 during this term.

You have revised the school development plan to incorporate the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. You have set out interim milestones with more detail on the expectations for pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.

However, too many actions are scheduled at the starting point of the plan. While the school does prioritise actions, the sequencing and phasing of actions is not clearly set out in the plan, leaving the risk of over burdening leaders, in particular. Senior leaders and members of the governing body are active in monitoring the effectiveness of the development plan. However, there is very little clarity as to how evaluation will ensure that the impact of all aspects are fully assessed.

Governors have responded with speed and determination to support and challenge the school. They are actively involved in developing the post-Ofsted improvement plan and ensuring the school receives the resources it needs to implement it. Governors gain first-hand information by visiting the school and have formed an 'Ofsted working group' to closely monitor the impact of actions taken. They are using their understanding of information to closely monitor the progress of pupils, including those in receipt of pupil premium funding. They have requested more frequent reporting on the progress of those not making expected progress.

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 continues to provide effective school improvement support for leaders. The numeracy adviser has met with leaders and very recently provided training for all teachers to improve planning in mathematics. The literacy adviser has helped the school to reshape phonic teaching for pupils in Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 Classes. A local authority improvement partner has provided advice on development planning and in brokering support. The Diocese has also appointed its own School Improvement Partner; she has already met with the headteacher, reviewed the development plan and helped to identify schools for leaders to visit to look at different practices and approaches. Headteachers from the Church Schools Cluster are supporting the headteacher with lesson observations.

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

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett
Her Majesty's Inspector