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Ms Lyn Bourne
Acting Headteacher
St Peter's Church of England Aided School
Quarry Lane
Exeter
Devon
EX2 5AP

Dear Ms Bourne

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Peter's Church of England Aided School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- Strengthen the targeted intervention and support programme (TISP) action plan to identify how governors will be involved in evaluating each of the priorities
- Include actions for the headteacher designate to work with the leadership team in order to ensure the rate of improvement does not slow.
- Improve further the quality of marking so that students use the 'even better if' comments more effectively by responding to them in a timely manner to improve their work.
- Ensure the school meets the statutory requirements by identifying a suitably qualified teacher as special education needs coordinator (SENCO) or arrange training for a teacher to qualify as SENCO.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you, your assistant headteachers, seven members of the governing body, a representative of the Diocese of Exeter, a group of students, a group of subject leaders and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the TISP action plan which was written in response to the areas for improvement identified during the section 5 inspection. I visited a number of classrooms to see the quality of marking as well as the books of the students I met.

Context

Since the previous inspection the school has appointed a permanent headteacher who will start in April 2014. She has made a number of visits to the school and will visit for one day each week after half term. The acting headteacher, headteacher designate, assistant headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body attended a 'getting to good' seminar on 13 January 2014, which they found very informative.

Main findings

Achievement in English language has improved. You have supported the subject leader so that now more children are expected to gain at least a GCSE grade C in this summer's examinations. This will also impact positively on the proportion of students who gain five or more higher level GCSE passes including English and mathematics. The analysis you have done has identified that if the current expected grades are accurate the proportion of students who make or exceed expected rates of progress is likely to be in line with national figures.

Actions to support students who are eligible for pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils with a parent in the armed forces and those looked after by the local authority) have improved. Staff are more aware of these students and the type of support they are receiving. As a result, teachers are making use of this information in their planning so that work is set at the right level for them. Programmes of support for pupil premium students are better coordinated and early evaluations show that the gap in standards between these students and others is reducing. You have supported students to visit prestigious universities to try and raise aspirations. However, when areas like attendance, persistent absence and exclusions are discussed there is less information on the gap between pupil premium and non-pupil premium students.

The number of disabled students and those with special education needs identified as requiring additional support has fallen. Support for these students is overseen by a higher level teaching assistant and an assistant headteacher. However, neither of these has the relevant qualifications to be a SENCO in a maintained school.

Senior leaders and subject leaders check on the quality of teaching through lesson observations and by looking in books. Subject leaders have their evaluations agreed

with their senior leader attached to their department. Students say the quality of teaching has improved with more lessons challenging them fully. However, they also report that some lessons are not challenging enough and the work is too easy. Marking has improved with work being marked more frequently. Although in some books work is not closely checked so errors are not identified or corrected. In these books the quality of presentation is poorer and students do not take as much pride in their work. When work is marked teachers identify good aspects of the work (what worked well) and how work could be improved (even better if). Students say this is most effective when they complete additional work to extend their knowledge and skills straight away or at the start of the next lesson. However this is not consistent and the areas for improvement identified by some teachers are about what students need to do next time they cover that work, which may not be soon.

The governing body has a very realistic overview of where the school is and what needs to be done to become good and then outstanding. They have shown that they will challenge staff who are complacent and not bringing about the necessary improvements. While the TISP action plan identifies the appropriate actions to improve teaching and raise achievement it does not include governors fully in evaluating the impact of the actions. Nor does it identify a clear role for the headteacher designate both in the interim period and after she takes up her role in April. The Governing Body have not agreed the funding for some of the actions.

Students report that the new 'one way system' around school has reduced poor behaviour in the corridors. They also report that litter is reduced because they have been made more responsible. The number of students who attend the internal exclusion room after being removed from lessons because of behaviour has reduced.

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 adviser has worked with the school to write the TISP action plan in line with Babcock School Improvement processes. She has also identified suitable external support for the school, including support to improve the quality of teaching and also support for the management of special educational needs. The Diocese of Exeter provided support the governing body appointment of a new headteacher.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Education, Youth and Children's Work for the Diocese of Exeter, Babcock LDP and the Director of Children's Services for Devon and as below.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector