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22 January 2014

Gareth Jones
Headteacher
St John's Church of England Primary School
Priory
Wellington
TA21 9EJ

Dear Mr Jones,

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

Following my visit to your school on 22 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 December 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 governing body and senior leaders should take further action to:

- Ensure those responsible for monitoring the work of the school development plan and the timescale for evaluating this work is clearly identified within the plan, and that the impact of completed work is shared regularly with all staff and governors.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, your teaching staff and the Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the actions taken since the recent inspection. I also held a telephone conversation with the local authority representative just prior to my visit. The work of the school since the recent inspection and the school improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

A member of the teaching staff left the school at the end of the December 2013 and was replaced by a new teacher at the start of this term. In addition one member of a previous job-share partnership is now teaching a class full-time, while the other partner is now focusing specifically on intervention work.

Main findings

You have rightly identified the lack of consistently good teaching to be the main priority for improvement within the school and have adapted the school development plan to include the recommendations made in the inspection report. As a result of setting high expectations all staff have a clearer understanding of what they need to do to improve pupils' achievement. For example, teachers are now setting work at the right level to challenge all pupils.

With the full support of the governing body you have introduced a programme for monitoring the performance of teachers, their professional development and the quality of their teaching. Teachers' personal performance targets now link directly to the school improvement plan. A timetable is now in place to closely monitor teachers' progress towards achieving their personal targets.

You have made sure that teachers have been given responsibility and time to complete key actions within the school development plan. For example, you have embarked on a programme of professional development focused on the teaching of mathematics. Other work has also begun on reviewing the quality of teachers' marking. Both of these initiatives are in response to the inspection recommendations and have been well received by staff. They are beginning to have the desired impact on improved provision. However, the development plan does not make clear who is responsible for monitoring the progress of actions that need to be taken and when they are to be completed. Also, the plan does not state how the impact of actions taken is to be evaluated and shared with staff and governors. This needs to be addressed quickly.

A detailed programme to monitor the work of the school has been established and staff have welcomed this improved model of accountability. Through regular pupil progress meetings and 'SENCo surgeries' teachers now have the opportunity to meet regularly to discuss the needs of pupils and their progress. Teachers say this is enabling them to develop a clearer understanding of how to adapt their teaching plans in order to better provide for the needs of all pupils and especially those who are most vulnerable. As a result, senior leaders and governors are being provided with a clearer outline of pupils' overall progress and this is allowing senior leaders and governors to measure more accurately the impact of the school's work.

Since the inspection the structure and working practice of the governing body has been reviewed. Governors are much clearer now about what they need to know and by when. Effective communication systems exist between the governing body and yourself which has further boosted your confidence to press on with improvements. The Chair of Governors understands the importance of securing the substantive headship of the school as soon as is practically possible. She is determined to use the appointment process as an opportunity for the school to define its uniqueness vision and aims, in order to become an outstanding school.

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 school is wisely drawing on the support and guidance of a National Leader in Education from a nearby outstanding primary school who has successfully introduced a regular programme of professional development visits for all staff to this school. This strategy is helping to secure the necessary improvements to teaching and the learning environment. Similarly, the governing body has plans in place to work more closely with governors from this school to help improve its effectiveness.

The local authority has provided timely support to the acting headteacher and other leaders. It is currently helping the governing body with its work to secure the appointment of a substantive headteacher. The school is also appreciative of the support provided by the diocese and welcomes forging stronger links with its local parish church.

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

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector