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23 January 2014

Mr Chris McConnell
Headteacher
All Saints Upton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Hough Green Road
Widnes
Cheshire
WA8 4PG

Dear Mr McConnell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to All Saints Upton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Halton

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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are now taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- continue to use the partnerships forged with stronger schools to strengthen further the quality of teaching
- rapidly implement the planned actions of the governing body.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. You gave me a tour of the school and we visited a few lessons during which staff took the opportunity to talk to me about their work. We reviewed the school improvement plan, pupils' progress information and sampled a few pupils' workbooks to check on progress. I looked at documents

relating to the performance management of teachers and your records of checks on the quality of teaching.

Context

One teacher is on maternity leave and a newly qualified teacher is covering Year 4. One teacher is absent through ill health and his Year 3 class is covered by a supply teacher. The deputy headteacher is now the mathematics leader. Two governors have left the governing body and one foundation governor has joined.

Main findings

You, your governors and staff have responded purposefully to the findings of my visit in September. Working together you have successfully set a steer for the improvement of the school and secured the commitment of staff. Raised expectations are recognised in the refreshed learning areas. Displays value pupils' work and more closely support their learning.

You reviewed the school improvement plan and it sets out the exact actions you need to take to improve pupils' education to good. It shows who will be responsible for this action, the time devoted to securing this action and key review points so that all involved can plot the progress of the school. You and governors are investing time and energy in ensuring that at least good teaching is the norm at All Saints; you are prepared to take necessary action if any teaching fails to meet this exacting standard. Strict performance management systems are now in place. Teachers' targets for their performance are linked directly to the progress pupils will make. You hold pupil progress meetings with each teacher to discuss this progress and hold them to account for any underachievement. You now plan to start a similar process of performance management with teaching assistants so that they are clear about their contribution to raising achievement for pupils.

You have nurtured the skills of your deputy headteacher and two senior leaders so that leadership is more evenly shared. Your complementary skills support each other as you work as a team to move the school forward. Together you have adhered to the strict plan for checking on the quality of teaching and planned actions. Through lesson observations, scrutinies of teachers' planning and pupils' workbooks, and analyses of pupils' progress information you identified the strengths in teachers' practice and use this to guide other teachers. You have already recognised an improvement in teaching through this method. But you recognise where teachers need more training and have set targets for improvement and support for these staff.

You have established links with more successful schools. Consequently, there are more opportunities for children in Reception to write and take responsibility for their learning. Similarly, the teaching of writing has improved so that teachers have a systematic approach to teaching the technical aspects of writing as well as the more

creative aspects. The sample of books we looked at shows that pupils are starting to respond to the better teaching of writing and some pupils take care with handwriting and presentation. However, this is not universal across the school and there is a need to review how handwriting is taught so that pupils develop a fluent style which supports their spelling skills. A new calculation policy is guiding staff in teaching basic skills in mathematics progressively across the school. There is a need to look at how pupils record their mathematics work so that it is set out logically and does not lead to confusion as they work on more complicated problems. Teachers are using the new assessment and tracking system to better match activities to pupils' needs and abilities. Nevertheless, there is room to improve this so that more able pupils are given harder work rather than more of the same. Teachers are marking pupils' work regularly and are usually writing a comment which guides the pupils to improve their work.

As a result of these actions pupils are starting to make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

An external review of governance is complete and governors have planned action to support their own improvement. Governors have a positive understanding of their strategic role; they are requesting certain information from leaders and starting to ask more searching questions. This has been helped through specific training on the use of published data on pupil progress. Governors have decided to re-constitute with the aim to form a refreshed governing body and the process for this is in place. Senior leaders have presented a report on their subjects of English and mathematics to governors, and governors are visiting school more often. As such they are finding out about the work of the school from different sources so that they are in a position to hold leaders to account for their decisions.

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 has acted upon advice from a variety of external settings to improve progress for pupils. Support for the headteacher has been vital in enabling him to communicate the vision for the school to staff, governors and parents so that all know the direction the school must take. Parents are more involved in the work of the school. Through her role as governor, the School and Setting Improvement Officer knows about developments in the school and can provide further support and challenge. The local authority advisory teacher for assessment has led training for staff and governors in understanding published achievement information. You have been pro-active in following up my recommendations to contact stronger schools and used the resource well.

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

Yours sincerely

Eileen Mulgrew

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk] – for academies