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31 March 2014

Caroline Phipps  
Headteacher  
The CofE School of St Edmund and St John  
Beechwood Road  
Dudley  
DY2 7QA

Dear Ms Phipps

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The CofE School of St Edmund and St John**

Following my visit to your school on 28 March 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 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 inspections. The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure that teachers use information about pupils' achievement in order to provide work which challenges pupils of different abilities
- organise training and support to rapidly improve the quality of phonics teaching
- refine the systems for checking the quality of teaching to ensure that any improvement in teaching is having a positive impact on the standards of work in pupils' books.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A range of documentation was reviewed, including the latest

information about pupils' progress, and feedback to teachers following reviews of pupils' work. During this visit, the deputy headteacher joined me on visits to classes to review work in pupils' books and observe their learning in lessons.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, one teacher has left. Two teachers have returned from maternity leave. A local authority governor has joined the governing body.

## **Main findings**

Teaching is not improving quickly enough to have a significant impact on pupils' learning, particularly in Key Stage 1. This is because teachers are not using information about pupils' achievement in order to provide work which challenges pupils of different abilities. In some lessons, for example, pupils are all completing the same task. Consequently, many pupils are working on skills that they have already mastered. Others are finding tasks too difficult and not completing their work.

Many pupils in Key Stage 1 are not able to apply their knowledge of phonics to tackle unfamiliar words when they are reading. They are not able to use their phonic knowledge to help them to spell when they are writing. Errors in pupils' letter formation are left uncorrected over a long period of time. Teachers do not regularly check the way pupils are holding their pencils when they are writing. As a result, pupils' handwriting is weak and presentation in pupils' books is poor.

You visit lessons frequently and you provide staff with detailed written feedback and recommendations on how to improve their practice. However, the poor standard of work in pupils' books, over a period of time, shows that teachers are not applying your guidance consistently or quickly enough in order to have significant impact on pupils' achievement.

Evidence supports your view that more children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making good progress. Samples of work in children's Learning Journeys show a good range of appropriate opportunities for children to practise and reinforce their skills in mathematics and literacy.

Your records show that support from the local authority mathematics consultant has resulted in some improvements in the quality of teaching in this subject. However, this has not yet had an impact on pupils' achievement. Work in pupils' books shows that they are rarely given opportunities to use and apply their mathematics skills in order to solve more challenging problems. This hinders pupils' progress.

Since my last visit you have continued to take effective action to improve pupils' attendance. Information is carefully and regularly checked and improvements in pupils' attendance and achievement are presented clearly and shared appropriately.

with the parents, carers and families involved. Your records show that attendance is now broadly average. Pupils are proud of their improved attendance. They understand the importance of attending school regularly and the impact that this can have on their achievement.

With the support of the local authority, the governing body has undertaken the recommended external review of governance. Based on the results of the review, governors have written an appropriate action plan. They have introduced an improvement committee which has clear terms of reference. Governors are visiting the school more frequently and gathering first-hand knowledge of actions taken and the impact on pupils' achievement. This is helping them to evaluate the rate of improvement accurately. Governors are influencing the quality of teaching in the school. They recognise that recent improvements have not yet had sufficient impact on pupils' achievement.

The outcome of this visit will be discussed with the Regional Director and may have an impact on the timing of the next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

You and other senior leaders have received an appropriate level of support from the local authority. The local authority has provided good support for governors. This includes the appointment of an additional local authority governor and some relevant training. As a result, governors feel equipped to address the areas for improvement and have an accurate understanding of the challenges facing the school. The local authority is carrying out a full review of pupils' learning and the quality of teaching on April 3 2014. A copy of the review report should be sent to me by email as soon as possible.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Dudley local authority.

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**