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Mrs Sandra Evans
Headteacher
Bamber Bridge St Aidan's Church of England Primary School
Larch Grove
Bamber Bridge
Preston
Lancashire
PR5 6GX

Dear Mrs Evans

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bamber Bridge St Aidan's Church of England Primary School, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 25 April 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 which was given to me by Mrs O'Sullivan and for the time she made available to discuss the actions leaders 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 school should take further action to:

- refine the school's action plan: provide a clear link between actions to be taken and their expected impact on improvements in pupils' progress, so that success can be celebrated and swift action can be taken by leaders if initiatives are not effective.
- ensure teachers have the opportunity to observe and learn from examples of outstanding practice in other schools; maximise the impact this has on the quality of pupils' learning by undertaking that teachers share their experiences with all adults across the school.

Evidence

At the time of the visit the headteacher was absent from school. During the visit, meetings were held with the assistant headteacher, the leaders of English and of

mathematics, a group of six pupils, a higher level teaching assistant, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Other documentation, such as minutes of governing body meetings and samples of pupils' work were scrutinised. A visit was made to all classrooms to look at examples of pupils' work displayed on walls.

Context

At the time of the visit there had been no significant changes to the school since the inspection. However, at the time of the visit the headteacher was absent from school, the assistant headteacher had assumed responsibility for the temporary leadership of the school. Two experienced teachers have returned to school following periods of extended absence. Two members of the local community have been appointed as governors to fill vacancies in the governing body.

Main findings

Leaders have acted swiftly to ensure that the progress already made and acknowledged in the last inspection report has continued. The action plan is detailed and identifies actions in a logical and concise manner. However, leaders and governors are not able to accurately evaluate the impact of their actions because measures of what is expected in terms of the progress made by pupils are not clear.

The raising of standards in reading has been given a high priority. Pupils' understanding of what they are reading is improving. Teachers' and teaching assistants plan skilfully and ask probing questions to ensure pupils are given the opportunity to think for themselves about what they have read. Pupils' spoken with said that the 'harder questions help us read between the lines'. This is resulting in pupils understanding more deeply what they have read and also in them being confident to write increasingly complex answers to questions about the text.

Pupils spoken with said they enjoy reading now. All classrooms have a reading area and a library of books. The pupils spoken with agreed with leaders' views that pupils read more often than they did before the inspection. Pupils record new words, found in their reading books, in their 'magpie book' and use these words to make their writing more interesting. A sample of pupils' work demonstrated that writing has improved because pupils write with greater detail and at an age appropriate level more regularly than they did before the inspection.

The introduction of a weekly problem solving activity in mathematics has resulted in improvements in the pupils' attitude towards mathematics. Pupils now use their basic mathematical skills in a range of situations to solve problems. This has resulted in them being less reliant on adults and more willing to push themselves to find their own answers. Pupils' enjoy their mathematics lessons, every one of those spoken

with said that mathematics was the lesson they enjoyed most in school. As a result the school's own data show that the most able pupils are making rapid progress.

Inconsistencies in both the quality of teaching and the leadership of teaching remain. In one pupil's work book the pupil had returned to her work in response to the teacher's comments and wrote a more detailed paragraph to end her story. In another work book the pupil had responded to his teacher's additional questions by correctly identifying the size of angles. In these examples the progress made by the pupils was at least good. However, in some books seen the teacher had missed opportunities to test pupils' understanding or encourage pupils to improve their work. In these cases the pupils' progress required improvement because the pupils could have learned more than they did.

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 assistant headteacher has established useful links with two other local primary schools. As a result teaching assistants have received additional training on how to question pupils effectively which in turn has led to improvements in both the reading and writing of those pupils who receive additional support.

The local authority has recently issued a warning notice to the school. Consideration is being given by the local authority with regards the nature of additional support to strengthen the strategic leadership of the school.

Leaders should ensure that plans, detailed in the school action plan, for teachers to visit other schools in order to observe and learn from outstanding practice, are given the highest priority.

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

Yours sincerely

Drew Crawshaw

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