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8 May 2014

Miss Elaine Young
Headteacher
St James' Church Primary School
Chelwood Drive
Allerton
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD15 7YD

Dear Miss Young

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St James' Church Primary School, Bradford

Following my visit to your school on 7 May 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 January 2014. 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Foundation Stage leader, 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. We visited lessons and undertook a work scrutiny in mathematics.

Context

Since the inspection a new special needs co-ordinator has been appointed and an additional learning mentor. The school is in the midst of a large recruitment drive due to staff leaving at the end of term and some staff going on maternity leave.

Main findings

The revised school improvement plan takes into account the areas for improvement identified at the inspection in January. The clearly marked additions to the plan indicate that you had an accurate view of how well the school was doing and what needed to be done, because little has been added to the main priorities you had agreed in September. Nevertheless, the plan is now much sharper and focused on exactly what actions need to be taken, by whom, how and when, with more precise periodic outcomes that can be used to track and measure the school's progress. The plan indicates that the school is making full use of support from the local authority and a National Leader in Education and involves governors in the monitoring process.

With steely determination, you have ensured that the school remains focused on the improvements it needs to make, despite disruptions from building work and time spent moving back into school. You have been ably supported in this by the governing body. This is ensuring better progress for pupils since January, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which has seen the most disruption because of building work. Teaching is improving but, there is still work to be done to provide the consistency that is needed. Staff are being supported well through training and professional development, as well as carefully targeted actions. Better systems and procedures begun before the inspection are being used to hold staff to account more robustly for the progress pupils are making.

In lessons visited, we saw pupils using displays and prompts to improve their writing. In some lessons, pupils were better supported in their learning through focused small group teaching. This provided the right level of challenge and support and teaching assistants contributed well to this. We agreed that this is not yet as consistent as it needs to be and in some instances, teaching is still not engaging all pupils as well as it needs to.

Attendance is improving as a result of the actions taken, particularly for those groups of pupils who have been persistently absent. A new breakfast club is ensuring that some of these pupils arrive earlier and have a positive start to the day. Other strategies are helping to tackle poor attendance and punctuality but, there is still some way to go if the school is to bring attendance in line with the national average.

The Governing Body has been swift to respond to the inspection findings and has undertaken the recommended review of governance and the use of pupil premium. From this a clear action plan has been drawn up and the determined leadership of the new Chair of Governors is ensuring that positive change has been made in how the governing body operates. For instance, it requested an up-to-date report on the use and impact of the pupil premium from the inclusion manager. From this it has been able to challenge leaders about the progress these pupils are making and quantify the impact of spending.

The school is due to undergo some significant changes in staffing and leadership in September but you have wasted no time in planning for this change. You see this as an opportunity for the school to progress and move into a new phase of its development. There is also growing capacity within the staff to develop middle leadership and senior leadership and actions have been taken to do just this.

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 drawing positively upon the external support provided by the local authority and a National Leader in Education. The Local Authority has been proactive in providing the support the school needs for teaching and learning and leadership. For instance, work with the early years' consultant has supported the Early Years Foundation Stage to improve the learning environment and ensure the developmental needs of children are met. The School Improvement Partner has supported the school to monitor standards, provided an external view and helped to ensure that judgements about teaching and learning are increasingly accurate. The local authority took prompt action to undertake the governor and pupil premium reviews. The partner school is supporting improvements in teaching and learning and the National Leader in Education is providing valuable support for you, as headteacher.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer
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