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22 May 2014

Emily Norman
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Norman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Bryanston Square CofE School

Following my visit to your school on 22 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 February 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. The school should take further action to:

- increase the pace at which the external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding is completed, so that leaders can continue to improve this aspect of leadership.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other leaders to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's action plan was evaluated. You joined me on some visits to lessons where we observed teaching and learning, and looked at pupils' work. I scrutinised some English and mathematics work from pupils in years 4 and 5. I held discussions with four teachers and six pupils from Years 1-6. I also met with four members of the governing body and held a discussion with the lead advisor from the local authority.

Context

There have been no changes to staffing since the last inspection. Three teachers will be leaving at the end of the year. You indicate the school does not need to replace these teachers. Two teachers are receiving intensive support and your records suggest they are beginning to improve as a result.

Main findings

The school's action plan is guiding improvement well. You have ensured it comprehensively addresses all of the areas for improvement. Leaders and teachers are left in no doubt what the school needs to do to secure improvement against your challenging but achievable timescales. You are keen to refine the plan so that the monitoring of success is not solely undertaken by the leaders who are responsible for specific actions.

Teachers are more frequently setting work at the right level. This is because you observe their lessons and provide tailored one-to-one support for teachers. We saw in our visits to lessons that much consideration is put into choosing activities and resources which support pupils of all abilities. Teachers' use of other adults was particularly strong. You are pleased that pupils' work in books confirms they are better challenged by teachers and are eager to make this stronger.

The new, simpler marking system has been well received by teachers and pupils alike. Your regular scrutiny of pupils' books confirms that marking is now consistently undertaken by all teachers. You are now keen to focus on the quality of teachers' feedback to pupils. We saw in some pupils' books that there is more work to be done to ensure that pupils consistently receive the standard of guidance you expect.

You have introduced 'fix-it' time to encourage pupils to make timely improvements to their work after feedback. Pupils like this and said that are 'less likely to repeat mistakes'. We agreed this is still inconsistent. Often, improvements are more obvious in mathematics than in English. You are currently considering alternative ways of how pupils use teachers' advice, so that it can be used to improve later work.

Teachers have been able to observe good and outstanding practice in other schools. You have matched these visits carefully to teachers' roles and experience. Teachers have responded positively and convey a renewed excitement about developing their teaching techniques. Your regular checks have indicated some modest improvements to the quality of teaching.

You have introduced the 'ready to write' strategy to encourage extended writing throughout the week. Consequently, most year groups are getting more opportunities for extended writing in English. Teachers are beginning to exploit this

in other curriculum subjects. You know this is not consistent and are eager to ensure this happens evenly across year groups and subjects.

Teachers have received guidance about the use of skills and strategies to support challenge in mathematics. We saw this being used well to allow some students to begin work in a mathematics lesson while others received further support. Though all pupils could use the strategy to multiply, some could not explain why it worked. You agreed that in some cases, pupils are developing their use of strategies but do not always have a good depth of understanding.

You and other leaders have developed the use of assessment information by all staff. Consequently, teachers are regularly involved in 'pupil progress meetings' with leaders. You ensure these meetings explore which pupils need additional support to make better progress. Teachers describe 'a more fluid picture of support' for pupils because identification and support is having much quicker impact. Some teachers are beginning to use this information in their planning of what pupils will learn next. You are pleased that pupils' progress, particularly in Years 4 and 5 is beginning to show improvement.

You have utilised a consultant to develop teachers' understanding and use of assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Assessment in the EYFS has been refined and gives a more specific picture of pupils' progress including those with special educational needs. Teachers can more easily identify what pupils need assistance with and are beginning to offer better support.

The external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding has begun, but is not yet completed. While this is disappointing, it has not impeded your improvements to this aspect of leadership. Your use of assessment information now incorporates regular checks on the progress of pupils supported by the pupil premium. New systems ensure that interventions funded by the pupil premium are matched precisely to the pupils who need it most. Pupils, most noticeably in years 4 and 5, are making better progress as a result. You are keen to ensure this continues to improve and that gaps in the progress of pupils in other year groups are also diminished.

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

You have benefited from external support from the local authority lead advisor and the London Diocesan Board for Schools advisor. Both have worked closely with you to provide regular challenge and support about improvements to achievement and teaching.

The local authority advisor has undertaken joint lesson observations with leaders. Consequently, senior leaders' judgements of the quality of teaching are more secure. Middle leaders make better use of assessment information as a result of training provided by the local authority advisor. Teachers in the EYFS have clearer systems to spot underachievement because of guidance provided by a local authority consultant.

The diocesan advisor brokered the external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding. However, the delayed start to the review means it is not yet possible to assess the impact of the review.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Westminster.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington
Her Majesty's Inspector