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11 June 2014

Ms Jo Holt  
Headteacher  
St Michael's CofE Primary School, Sunninghill  
School Road  
Sunninghill  
Ascot  
SL5 7AD

Dear Ms Jo Holt

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Michael's CofE Primary School, Sunninghill**

Following my visit to your school on 10 June 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:

- make sure all subject leaders are able to evaluate how effectively class teachers are raising achievement
- ensure the governors promptly commission the review of the way the school uses its additional 'pupil premium' funding.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, your assistant headteacher, the Chair of Governors, the diocesan link adviser, a representative from the local authority and I also spoke on the phone with your school improvement partner to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. We visited Year 2, 3, and 4 classes. I scrutinised Year 5 pupils' work. I evaluated the action plan.

#### **Context**

Since the start of the summer term the Year 2 class teaching is being shared with a new teacher. A deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have been appointed and will take up their positions from September 2014.

## **Main findings**

You are determined to move the school to good as quickly as possible. You have been unflinching in this purpose. Having taken the recommendations from the previous inspection report fully on board, you are sensibly strengthening your leadership team. You recognise that this as a crucial first step, upon which the success of other planned actions depends.

The Chair of Governors has significant relevant experience in education. He has used this to improve the way the governors hold the school to account, for example all meetings focus entirely on teaching and progress. The governors are clear about the information that they want from the school and how they want it presented. They are using information on the progress pupils are making to ask probing questions. The Chair of Governors has made plans to reconstitute the governing body so it is leaner and sharper. The governors are now making plans to commission a review of the way the school uses its additional 'pupil premium' funding.

Teachers are now setting a range of 'challenge tasks', each one with an increasing level of challenge. Pupils choose which particular task they do. This choice is rightly guided by the teacher to ensure that everyone is challenged by the work. In the classes I visited, pupils said they liked this new method of learning. Teachers are planning more carefully to ensure that these 'challenge tasks' have a clear purpose and are appropriately demanding. The 'challenge tasks' are accompanied by checklists that helpfully describe the steps required in order to succeed. Occasionally pupils are able to accomplish higher level 'challenge tasks' without fully understanding how to do the easier ones. This could lead to gaps in their learning. Teachers are not consistently questioning pupils while they are working to ensure they understand the easier 'challenge tasks' along with the one they have chosen.

Subject leaders are taking more responsibility for leading improvement. They have written subject improvement plans that feed into the main action plan. There are inconsistencies in the extent to which subject leaders are monitoring and checking pupils' progress in their subject areas. Leaders of literacy and numeracy have been involved in joint monitoring activities with senior leaders. However other subject leaders have not done this. They are not sufficiently responsible for the progress pupils are making. There are plans in place to use external partners to train middle leaders in this aspect of their work. Senior leaders are making better use of data on pupils' progress to support and challenge subject leaders. However they are not yet consistently robust in the questions they ask to hold subject leaders to account.

The action plan describes the success of planned actions in terms of the progress pupils are making. Each section begins with a helpful overview, detailing what actions are expected of teachers, teaching assistants, subject leaders and senior leaders. The plan clearly indicates what you have found out from your monitoring. The changes you are making as a result of your checks are not sufficiently obvious. The actions identified in the plan are too numerous and not all of them are linked closely enough to the areas for improvement from the previous report.

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 thought carefully about what external help you need. You are receiving well-focused support from a school improvement partner commissioned by the Ascot Cluster, from the diocesan link adviser and from your links with local primary and secondary schools. The local authority has assisted you with staffing and recruitment issues. This support has been limited to date but the local authority has adopted a new operating model, which means more support will be available. Their representative has agreed to work with you to evaluate the impact of the support given by your external partners. She has also agreed to provide bespoke training for your new senior leaders.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, and the Diocese of Oxford.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**