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11 June 2014

Mr Geoff Cherrill
Headteacher
St Luke's School
Cricklade Road
Swindon
SN2 7AS

Dear Mr Cherrill

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Luke's School

Following my visit to your school on 11 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 use of specific regional training events organised by Ofsted to specifically support those schools that require improvement
- use the Ofsted survey report, *School governance: Learning from the best* to support the work of the governing body in evaluating the performance of the school and holding school leaders to account

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, two Co-Chairs of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I accompanied you on a walk around the school where I visited classrooms and spoke informally to some staff and students. I considered the

school's information on the progress students are making. I looked at the minutes from recent governing body meetings and reviewed the information gathered from lesson observations and staff development. The school development plan was evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection the interim headteacher has been appointed as the substantive headteacher. Two new teachers and a bursar have been appointed. Two specialist support staff have left the school.

Main findings

It is evident from the schools' own monitoring records that the proportion of good teaching is increasing. This is because a regular and evaluative approach to monitoring the quality of teaching has been introduced, the outcomes of which are used to develop training for individual teachers. Leaders are making sure that teachers have the appropriate knowledge and skills to teach the different subjects. Lessons are calm and students are engaged in their work because they are given meaningful activities which they can relate to. For example, using a popular world sporting event as a basis for mathematics lessons helped the students develop their problem-solving skills. Classrooms are more stimulating and care is taken to motivate the students by displaying their work.

A restructuring of the leadership team is enabling the school to have a better approach to meeting the needs of all students. Responsibilities have been delegated and there is clear accountability for senior staff. There is clarity of purpose and a strong vision for the future. New systems introduced to track progress ensure that senior leaders can check whether all groups of students are achieving as well as they should. Expectations of what students can achieve have been raised and challenging targets have been set for future year groups. Students entitled to additional government funding are making accelerated progress. By displaying individual timetables, all members of the school community know exactly where each student should be at any point in the day. This has raised the expectations of both staff and students.

The number of occasions where physical restraint is used has declined significantly because teaching staff are meeting the complex needs of the students and more adept at defusing potentially challenging situations. As a result of a more proactive approach to the importance of regular attendance, students willingly come to school. The early morning breakfast times provide opportunities for them to chat to the teaching staff and settle themselves for the school day. Students have been made responsible for a budget that is available to them to fund extra fun activities. Good

conduct results in points being awarded but any costs which are incurred relating to damage caused by students in and around the school are deducted.

The governing body have been closely involved in the implementation of the school development plan. The two Co-Chairs of the Governing Body meet with the headteacher regularly to review the improvements being made. Minutes from governing body meetings show that challenging questions are asked of the leadership team who respond swiftly and take any necessary action in school. Governors have a better understanding of the need to rigorously seek evidence from a range of sources to gain a full picture of the school's performance. Governance has been strengthened by the recruitment of new governors who bring with them a wealth of valuable business experience. Members of the governing body have undertaken an extensive range of training opportunities. They are currently involved in an external review of their role which has included a detailed audit of their skills. However, this is very much work in progress and is an area that requires further development.

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

Through regular challenge meetings and review sessions the local authority rigorously challenges the school on its journey of improvement. Staff training has been very well-received from the local authority and other external agencies. For example, teaching staff have valued the specialist training they received from an educational psychologist. The guidance and support given by a Local Leader in Education and an independent consultant is used well to drive further developments. In addition to this, working in partnership with other schools has strengthened the confidence of all staff. For example, a recent review undertaken by a partnership school confirmed the improvements in teaching and learning which have taken place since the inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Co-Chairs of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Swindon.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector