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15 July 2014

Alice Brown
Headteacher
St Mary's CofE Primary School
Lansdown View
Timsbury
Bath
BA2 0JR

Dear Miss Brown

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

Following my visit to your school on 14 July 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I considered a range of documentation, including records of lesson observations, information about pupils' progress and the 2014 results in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. I met with subject leaders to discuss leadership development and with the English subject leader to discuss the quality of teaching across the school. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Context

Since my first visit to the school in September 2013, there has been a considerable amount of staff absence. This has reduced the school's capacity to deliver the planned improvements. One teacher has left the school and two more will be leaving at the end of this term.

Main findings

I am pleased to report that the school has remained focused on improving the quality of teaching. Leaders have tackled weaker teaching and have provided targeted staff training. As a result, pupils' achievement has improved. A much higher proportion of pupils in Year 1 have achieved the expected level in phonics than in 2013. The standards achieved at the end of Year 2 this year have improved in mathematics. The unvalidated 2014 Key Stage 2 results indicate that over half the pupils have been able to achieve the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. These improved results are the consequence of better teaching.

Subject leaders are providing much clearer guidance and support to other teachers in the school. However, they are not yet sufficiently focused on ensuring that their work tackles the school's key objective; to improve the teaching and assessment of writing. Governance continues to be strong. The governors' commitment to undertaking an external review of governance indicates their willingness to improve and strengthen their own practice.

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 has made good use of the support provided by the local authority. Meetings with school improvement advisors and colleague headteachers have provided leaders with valuable opportunities to evaluate progress against the school's improvement plans. Leadership coaching, joint lesson observations and learning walks have supported the school's own accurate self-evaluation. Consequently, this support is enabling the school to improve.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Bath and North East Somerset and the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Yours sincerely

Phillip Minns
Her Majesty's Inspector