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12 September 2014

Mr N Philips
Headteacher
St Peter's CofE Primary School
Fabians Way
Henfield
West Sussex
BN5 9PU

Dear Mr Philips

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

Following my visit to your school on 12 September 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 June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- improve the action plan, so it tackles the areas for improvement with clarity and urgency
- ensure teachers are clear about what pupils should be learning and select purposeful activities during lessons
- tackle inconsistencies in teachers' marking and feedback
- make sure governors have sufficient knowledge to hold the leadership team to account.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, middle leaders and governors to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also talked to a representative from the local authority. I visited classes with you, scrutinised work in pupils' books and evaluated the school improvement plan.

Main findings

You have responded seriously to the judgement that the school 'requires improvement' but the changes you have made are not improving learning quickly enough and you do not have high enough expectations of what the staff and pupils can achieve. The school improvement plan includes all the required areas for improvement but it is not sharply focused on how pupils' achievements will be improved and is not ambitious enough. A revised plan should be completed by the end of the first half of the autumn term.

The staff have a 'can-do' approach and are keen to make the necessary improvements. They have responded positively to the need to improve and want to do their best for the pupils. However, some of the teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement are not high enough and they are not clear enough about what they need to do to improve.

You have sensibly restructured the leadership responsibilities so that newly appointed phase leaders (who lead one or more year-groups) are now accountable for the learning of pupils in their phases. The deputy headteacher is working with them to develop the skills required for the role, but the essential checking of teachers' practice is not yet as regular as it should be.

Teaching continues to be variable. Many teachers are not clear what they expect pupils to learn. In one lesson the children made no progress when 'responding imaginatively to a text' by drawing and colouring a picture while the teacher read out a story. However, in another class, pupils made good progress when the teacher enabled them to explore in groups the complex vocabulary from the story, then share their work with the class.

The new marking and feedback policy is not yet being used by all teachers. Although most teachers are responding to pupils' work, their comments do not help pupils to know what to do next. You need to monitor this closely and tackle inconsistencies.

Governors now recognise they need to raise their expectations so they can hold you to account more purposefully. Their expectations of what pupils can achieve are not as high as they should be. They are very supportive of the changes you have made but do not always probe sufficiently to check that what you say about the progress being made is accurate.

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

School leaders and governors are very appreciative of the support offered by the local authority since the inspection in June. However, the current level of support is insufficient. The local authority does not yet have a strong enough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex and the Diocese of Chichester.

Yours sincerely

Louise Adams
Seconded Inspector