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Mrs P Edwards
Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School
Middleton Road
Oswestry
SY11 2LF

Dear Mrs Edwards

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Trinity Church of England Primary

Following my visit to your school on 23 October 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 the interim executive board are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- find out whether pupils in Years 3 and 4 who did not meet the standard in the phonics check in Key Stage 1, are now able to use their phonic knowledge confidently and successfully in their reading. The school should provide targeted support for any pupils who continue to need additional help in phonics
- ensure that improvement plans show how the interim executive board evaluate the success of leaders' work in driving improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Interim Executive Board to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plans were evaluated and I considered a range of documents including records of your checks on the work of teachers and on pupils' progress. I also made brief visits to classrooms.

Context

This school was judged to require special measures in February 2013. You joined the school in January 2014 and at the same time an interim executive board was established. In June 2014 the school was inspected and was taken out of special measures and judged as requiring improvement. Since this inspection, a new leader with responsibility for Key Stage 2 has joined the school, a second teacher has gone on maternity leave and two temporary teachers have been appointed. The school is due to become an academy on 1 December 2014.

Main findings

It is clear from my visit, that you, the staff and the interim executive board are determined that Holy Trinity Primary quickly becomes a good school. You have set ambitious targets for improvement and are very clear about the steps that must be taken to ensure that teaching and pupils' achievement become consistently good. Your action plans are thorough and detailed. They cover all the areas for improvement identified during the last inspection and set out how leaders will check that the agreed improvements are being implemented in every class. However, the plans do not show how the interim executive board evaluate the success of leaders' work in driving improvement.

You and the local authority school improvement adviser have worked with less experienced leaders to develop their skills in evaluating the quality of teaching. You are now confident that their judgements are secure. Leaders regularly visit classrooms and make frequent checks on the work in pupils' books. They also look carefully at teachers' planning to ensure that it builds effectively on pupils' previous learning and includes activities which are suitably demanding for pupils of different abilities. When you identify aspects of teaching which require improvement, you give precise feedback to teachers so that they are clear about how to improve. You then provide support and training to help them develop, before making further checks to ensure that the required changes have been made. This rigorous approach is leading to improvements in teaching.

Well established and efficient systems are in place for gathering and analysing information about pupils' progress. This information is now shared more widely with

teachers and teaching assistants so that all staff are aware of the targets set for each pupil and are able to quickly identify underachievement and put in place appropriate interventions and support. As a result of your analysis of information about different groups of pupils, you have identified that pupils with disabilities and special educational needs and those known to be eligible for pupil premium, do not do as well as their classmates. In order to tackle this inequality, you have redefined the roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants so that in every class there is an adult who has particular responsibility, under the guidance of the teacher, for these two groups of pupils. You have set clear expectations for all teaching assistants so that they understand the need for pupils to make accelerated progress in order to make up for previous underachievement.

Leaders have analysed the attainment of pupils in grammar, spelling and punctuation and have identified particular weaknesses in spelling. As a consequence, all staff have received training to improve their knowledge and their skills in teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make) and spelling. Additional support is being provided by leaders for temporary teachers to enable them to teach grammar and punctuation more effectively. This additional training and regular timetabled lessons for grammar, spelling and punctuation are having a positive impact. For example, over 90% of pupils in Year 6 have made at least 6 months progress in spelling since September.

Some pupils in Years 3 and 4 did not meet the phonics standards in Key Stage 1 but leaders have not checked whether these pupils have made sufficient progress so that they now meet the standard and are able to use their phonic knowledge confidently and successfully in their reading.

You have begun to raise the profile of reading. You now ensure that teachers listen to every child read at least once a week and that pupils who don't read regularly at home read more frequently in school with teaching assistants. This work is starting to have an impact. Since September there has been an increase, in every year group, in the proportions of pupils whose reading age is equal to or above their chronological age. You are beginning to develop your school library but you acknowledge that further work is required so that the library becomes a vibrant and appealing resource which promotes a love of reading.

Training and additional resources have been provided for teachers to ensure that they become more skilled in teaching pupils how to solve mathematical problems. You have visited lessons in order to evaluate the impact of this training and have found improvements in most classes. Where weaknesses remain, leaders and a local authority advisory teacher are providing additional support for teachers. You rightly intend to make further checks to see if problem solving is being taught regularly and effectively, by checking on the work in pupils' mathematics books.

Leaders are checking that all teachers understand and follow the school marking policy so that teacher's comments tell pupils what they have done well and what

they must do to improve their work further. You are providing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues within and beyond the school to ensure that their assessments of pupils' work and attainment are accurate.

Members of the interim executive board have a very thorough understanding of the school's strengths and of the areas which require improvement. They have clear roles and responsibilities and make regular visits to the school to check that the improvements made are having the required impact. Board members meet regularly with school leaders and the local authority and ensure that they receive updates from the school leaders responsible for each area requiring improvement. They question leaders to assure themselves that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are improving rapidly.

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 headteacher and members of the interim executive board agree that they receive very good support from the local authority. The school improvement adviser knows the school very well. She meets regularly with the headteacher to review information about pupils' progress and has worked with less experienced leaders to develop their skills and confidence. Local authority advisory teachers have provided training and support for teachers and teaching assistants in English and mathematics and this is contributing to improvements in their subject knowledge and skills. The local authority human resources department has also provided helpful advice to the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Shropshire.

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel
Her Majesty's Inspector