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10 November 2014

Mrs Jane Nellar
Headteacher
Saint Lawrence's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Heslington Road
York
North Yorkshire
YO10 5BW

Dear Mrs Nellar

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Saint Lawrence's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, York

Following my visit to your school on 6 November 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. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- develop more formal partnerships with other, better performing, schools.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, two class teachers, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the post inspection action plan and looked at a range of evidence including information on pupils' progress, lesson observation records and governing body minutes. I met with two groups of pupils. You accompanied me on a tour of the school, which included visiting all classrooms, talking to pupils and sampling some pupils' work.

Context

There have been a small number of changes to the context of the school since the last inspection. One teacher left at the end of the summer term and a new full-time teacher joined the school in September 2014. A part-time teacher was recruited to the role of lead practitioner responsible for developing the skills of teachers. There is one vacancy on the governing body for an additional foundation governor.

Main findings

A post inspection improvement plan, with clear actions and timescales has been put together to address all the areas requiring improvement. Leaders and managers are correctly using a broad range of approaches to gauge the quality of teaching. For example, in addition to lesson observations they take account of work scrutiny and the tracking of pupils' levels of attainment to judge teaching. There is on-going evidence of the impact of the school's work.

- The appointment of a very experienced teacher as a 'lead practitioner' with the sole aim of developing the teaching and leadership skills of staff is already showing early signs of impact. One teacher stated this bespoke support, including the observing, analysing and the modelling of effective lessons, has helped him to hone his teaching skills.
- Performance management is continuing to be used effectively to hold teachers to account for the attainment and progress of the pupils they teach. Under performance is challenged robustly.
- Staff are being held to account for the impact of their work on pupils' learning. Regular written feedback to teachers identifies strengths and areas for improvement in teaching. This is helping to direct support to individual teachers and monitoring information indicates it is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching.
- The tracking of pupils' levels shows pupils' progress is continuing to improve in reading, writing and mathematics although there is some variability, particularly where there has been disruption to teaching.
- There is some evidence of greater challenge for the most able in mathematics but there is scope for this to be more consistent across all year groups.
- The marking of pupils' work and the written feedback provided by teachers continues to be strong. These identify how pupils should improve future work or correct their current piece of work. Leaders have correctly identified the need to ensure an appropriate balance of comments directed to both current and future pieces of work.
- There is clear evidence that pupils' awareness of the dangers of cyber-bullying has improved. They are able to talk with confidence about how they would deal with any such issues and are aware, for example, of the possible dangers of social media and the importance of not sharing personal information on-line.

- Governors continue to know the school well and are keenly aware of where most improvement is needed. They understand fully that a particular issue for the school remains the need to recruit, induct and retain effective staff and have justifiably challenged senior leaders to improve their work in this important area.

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 local authority has provided appropriate support and the local authority's challenge partner knows the school well. Consequently, she has been able to broker support. Staff have engaged well with local authority staff to improve the teaching of phonics, which has contributed to improved progress in this area. The headteacher has valued support from the local authority human resources team which has helped to resolve some staffing issues. Although there has been some work with other local schools and some staff have visited other schools there is not a formal partnership with another, better performing, school. Governors are keen that the school learns from the very best.

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

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali

Her Majesty's Inspector