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Johanna Nickolls
Headteacher
Churchfield CofE (C) Primary School
Sandy Lane
Rugeley
WS15 2LB

Dear Miss Nickolls

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Churchfield CofE (C) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 September 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 May 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:

- ensure that there is clarity about how the school identifies which pupils have special educational needs and which pupils may be underachieving as a result of poor teaching in the past
- measure and evaluate the impact of interventions for pupils who need extra help
- ensure that the school makes all the appropriate checks when new staff are appointed, including checks on the prohibition of teachers.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and with members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I made brief

visits to classrooms and met with a representative of the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated and information about pupils' progress and attainment was considered.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection a new deputy headteacher has been appointed. One teacher left the school at the end of the summer term and two new teachers joined the school in September.

Main findings

You are successfully building on the improvements recognised at the last inspection. Strong ambition to ensure that the school becomes good is reflected in the resolve of senior leaders, staff and governors. The areas for improvement, identified during the section 5 inspection, are embedded within your school action plan. This plan clearly and logically sets out the steps that will be taken in order to make the necessary improvements and identifies how leaders will check that the actions taken have been successful.

Since the inspection you have refined the way that you record and check pupils' progress. These records now show pupils' different starting points and include both short- and long-term targets, which reflect high expectations for all pupils. You are analysing information about pupils' progress effectively so that you quickly identify anomalies between different groups and individuals and take appropriate action.

You have introduced plans for each year group, which include information about the attendance and additional characteristics and needs of different groups and individuals. These plans are used by teachers, alongside information about pupils' progress, and enable them to identify appropriate next steps or interventions for pupils who are at risk of underachievement.

School leaders have ensured that teachers have become more skilled in assessing standards in reading, writing and mathematics by providing training and by creating opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues from within and beyond the school to check the accuracy and consistency of judgements. This improved accuracy was confirmed by the local authority when representatives visited the school to check assessment judgements and confirm the reliability of the evidence used.

More accurate assessment is helping teachers to ensure that their teaching builds on what pupils already know, understand and can do. Senior leaders now regularly check that teachers' lesson plans build on prior learning and provide appropriate challenge for pupils of different ability. Leaders are making more regular visits to

classrooms to ensure that teaching is resulting in good progress for all pupils. When an aspect of teaching is not effective, you and other leaders ensure that suitable training and support are provided so that the teacher is able to improve their skills.

You have recognised that some pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, when in fact they are underachieving as a result of poor teaching in the past. You have begun to address this but additional clarity is required so that all teachers become skilled in identifying special educational needs as well as in addressing gaps in prior learning. A range of interventions are used to support pupils who need extra help but the impact of these interventions on pupils' progress is not always measured and evaluated effectively.

Since the section 5 inspection there has been a renewed focus on improving handwriting and presentation. The handwriting scheme has been carefully linked to the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and spelling. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate and improve the presentation of their work and are keen to gain their 'pen licences'. Your checks on the work in pupils' books indicate that this work is beginning to lead to improvements.

Staff now have a more consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour and good behaviour is recognised and celebrated. Informal feedback from regular visitors to the school, along with more formal observations by a Local Leader in Education, indicate that behaviour in lessons has improved. During my visits to classes, pupils were working calmly and purposefully. Your monitoring provides evidence that there are now few incidents of poor behaviour.

Efforts to improve attendance have also been renewed. Information about pupils' attendance is checked and analysed regularly. Absences are followed up promptly and robustly and, when absences are not explained and school staff are concerned, home visits are made to check that pupils are safe and well. Good attendance is promoted and rewarded. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this work.

Pre-employment checks are made and recorded for all staff but the single central record does not include checks regarding the prohibition of teachers. This should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Governors have rightly focused their attention on building leadership capacity and improving the quality of teaching. They have been closely involved in the recruitment of new staff, including a new deputy headteacher and have worked with the headteacher to develop a new structure for school leadership, which meets the development needs of the school. Governors recognise the need to become less reliant on the information provided by the headteacher and have attended training and are improving their knowledge and skills so that they are more able to hold school leaders to account for their work. Governors recognise the need to look for further opportunities to engage with parents and ascertain their views about the school.

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 district manager for improvement (DMI) is providing a good level of support and challenge to the school. She visits the school regularly and works with leaders to make checks on the quality of teaching and on pupils' progress. The DMI also meets with governors each half term to review progress against the objectives on the school action plan.

The local authority has commissioned the support of a Local Leader of Education who is providing further support to the newly formed leadership team. The local authority has also supported the school in making links with other schools to allow them to work collaboratively. For example, staff from Churchfield have worked with staff from a neighbouring school in order to make improvements in the teaching of literacy.

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

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel
Her Majesty's Inspector