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21 January 2015

David Swift  
St Mary's CofE (C) First School  
Marston Road  
Wheaton Aston  
Stafford  
ST19 9PQ

Dear Mr Swift

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's CofE (C) First School**

Following my visit to your school on 20 January 2015, 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 September 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 action plans set clear and measurable targets for improvement and identify how progress towards these targets will be monitored and evaluated.
- develop leaders' understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage so that they are more able to identify where improvements are required in the school's provision for its youngest pupils
- ensure that governors receive further training to enable them to accurately evaluate the achievement of pupils in the school in comparison with the achievement of pupils nationally.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you as executive headteacher and the deputy headteacher. I also met with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing

Body. A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. I made brief visits to classrooms. I reviewed a range of documentation including information about pupils' progress and the minutes of meetings of the governing body.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection in September, a teacher with management responsibilities and two temporary part-time teachers have left the school. A new deputy headteacher and two new teachers took up their posts at the beginning of January.

## **Main findings**

You, the deputy headteacher and the governors have a shared determination that the required improvements will be made quickly so that St Mary's becomes a good school. The newly appointed deputy headteacher already has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is working closely with you to drive improvement. You have taken prompt action to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and have begun to set more challenging targets for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.

Your written action plans cover all of the areas for improvement identified during the Section 5 inspection and set out a range of appropriate actions that you intend to take. However, these plans do not set out with enough precision what you intend to achieve or how you will measure and evaluate your progress towards these targets.

The new deputy headteacher has taken responsibility for leading improvement in mathematics while the newly appointed teacher will co-ordinate provision in English. You have set out clear responsibilities and objectives for the deputy headteacher which are helping him to focus his attention on the most pressing needs. You are in the process of establishing the responsibilities and priorities for the English subject leader. These leaders have already met with their counterparts at the federated middle school to discuss changes in the curriculum and to evaluate the way that teachers plan and assess learning.

You and the deputy headteacher have introduced regular meetings with teachers to discuss the progress of pupils in their class. You are using information about pupils' progress along with the work in their books to identify underachievement and explore the reasons for this. You are then deciding with class teachers how best to support pupils so that their progress accelerates.

As senior leaders, you and the deputy headteacher have an appropriate understanding of the curriculum and of attainment and progress measures in Key Stages 1 and 2. However, you both acknowledge that you are less knowledgeable about the Early Years Foundation Stage. This means that you are less able to

accurately evaluate the provision, quality of teaching and pupils' progress in these classes.

The new deputy headteacher has introduced a new behaviour policy. As a result, staff now have a more consistent approach to promoting and rewarding good behaviour and to tackling poor behaviour.

Governors have a realistic overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body are passionate about the school and its community and are keen to learn in order to be able to hold leaders to account more effectively. Minutes from meetings of the governing body indicate that governors have begun to ask the headteacher more challenging questions. Since the Section 5 inspection governors have been keenly focused on making good appointments for the deputy and class teacher posts. They recognise that the recruitment of an effective permanent Reception class teacher is a crucial next step and a rigorous selection process is underway. Governors have carried out an audit of their skills and have welcomed an external review of governance. They recognise that they need further training, for example, to enable them to more accurately evaluate the achievement of pupils in the school in comparison with the achievement of pupils nationally.

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 is providing good support and challenge to school leaders and governors. The local authority improvement advisor visits the school regularly and has a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The local authority has commissioned the support of a consultant headteacher who has advised the headteacher on a range of issues including the recruitment of new staff. The local authority has also commissioned support from English, mathematics and Early Years Foundation Stage advisors. This support is beginning to lead to improvements in the quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Morag Kophamel

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc. Chair of the Governing Body  
cc. Local authority  
cc. Diocese