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29 January 2015

Mark Davies
Headteacher
St Mary's Church of England Primary School
Poynton Road
Shawbury
Shrewsbury
SY4 4JR

Dear Mr Davies

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 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 October 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:

- Develop a schedule for your monitoring activities, including short visits to lessons and checks on the progress pupils are making in books, so that these take place regularly and have a specific purpose.
- Make better use of the information gathered from your checks on the quality of teaching to identify where there is still work to be done to improve teaching and learning, and to inform governors about the strengths seen.
- Include milestones in the post-Ofsted action plan so that governors can see if pupils' progress is improving rapidly enough to compensate for past underachievement so that targets for achievement are met

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher, a group of three governors including the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and the school improvement adviser, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met formally with a group of pupils from Key Stage 2 and carried out a series of short visits to lessons. The school's post-Ofsted action plan was evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection you have continued as the acting headteacher, due to the school's substantive headteacher's continued compassionate leave. The acting deputy headteacher has been appointed as the permanent post-holder following a recruitment process.

Main findings

Senior leaders, including governors, have continued with their drive to improve the school. A great deal of work is being done, but this is not always as focussed as it might be, or used well enough to identify precisely what needs to be done to improve teaching and learning in the school. However, actions are in place to start to address all the areas for improvement identified in the inspection.

Leaders have a more detailed knowledge of the attainment and progress of each year group, and for all significant groups of pupils, such as disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and more-able pupils. Systems to collate this information are used well to identify, for individual pupils, where their progress is slowing and to plan activities that will help them to catch-up. Governors receive regular updates on achievement information but, as no intermediate milestones have been identified, it is not clear if the school is on track to meet its target to be judged a good school or better within two years.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are closely monitored. Parents are involved in meetings with teachers to review their child's progress and to inform them how challenging targets are set. Teaching assistants were seen during the inspection working effectively with small groups of pupils, and one-to-one with pupils requiring more intensive support such as to help with speech and language development. Checks are carried out on the effectiveness of non-teaching staff but this would be more effective if targets to improve their performance were set and reviewed within the same timescale as that of teaching staff.

You and your deputy headteacher carry out a range of activities to gather information on the quality of teaching in the school. This includes short visits to lessons and informal 'drop-ins' to classes in addition to formal lesson observations and checks on pupils' work in books. Information is recorded for formal lesson observations but you do not identify sharply enough the purpose of other monitoring

activities, or collate the information you find out. An opportunity is therefore missed to identify the overall strengths of teaching in the school and to tailor further support for teachers or teaching assistants to improve teaching and learning. Governors do not know enough about the strengths of teaching or if strategies used to support teaching are making a difference.

Teachers and pupils talked very enthusiastically about how behaviour has improved in the school. Year 5 and 6 pupils greatly appreciate the opportunity to be school council representatives and members of the peer council. They understand the responsibilities that these roles bring and carry out their duties with pride. As a result, lunchtime arrangements are calm and orderly and other pupils show respect for older pupils who hold these positions of responsibility in the school. Members of peer council provide support for pupils who may have 'fallen out' with their friends, and know to tell a teacher if someone is particularly upset or feels unsafe.

In lessons, pupils are interested in their work and are keen to learn, which is encouraged by teachers who plan a range of interesting activities for their pupils. Year 4 pupils enjoyed preparing to interview a partner about their recent experiences on a residential activity. They knew the 'best questions' to ask so that they could find out more information and were very excited about using tablet computers to film the interviews. Year 1 pupils were confident and articulate in explaining the 'split digraph' in identifying 'igh' sounds while learning about the sounds letters make. Teachers encourage good behaviour by using praise and pupils were seen working well together.

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 school has been effectively supported in its improvement by a national leader of education and through other support provided by the local authority through the school's improvement partner. Further support is available through both as and when school leaders identify where this is required.

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

Yours sincerely

Denah Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector