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Sarah Yeomans
Headteacher
St Chad's CofE (C) Primary School
Pattingham
Wolverhampton
WV6 7AQ

Dear Mrs Yeomans

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Chad's CofE (C) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 31 March 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 November 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 are more sharply focused on the areas for improvement and are clear about when each action must be completed
- check that plans show how and when leaders and governors will evaluate whether the actions taken have been successful in improving teaching and accelerating pupils' progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you as headteacher and with subject leaders for mathematics and English. I also met with four members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plans were evaluated and a number of documents were considered including the school's records of the checks made by

leaders on the work of teachers. Information about pupils' progress was considered and I looked at the work in a sample of pupils' books. Brief visits were made to lessons.

Context

One new governor has been appointed since the section 5 inspection.

Main findings

You, other leaders and governors agree that the section 5 inspection findings have galvanised you into taking more urgent action to improve teaching and accelerate pupils' progress.

The school's action plans cover all of the areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection and set out the many actions that the school is taking to improve the school. However, some of the planned actions do not directly relate to the priorities for improvement and the plan does not always state when actions should be completed. This means that you and other leaders are trying to do too much at the same time. It also makes it difficult for leaders to evaluate the impact of their work on each improvement priority.

Records of your visits to classrooms are now more focused on evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress. Following observations in lessons, you give clear guidance to teachers on how they must improve their work. However, records do not always set out how and when leaders will check that the required improvements have been made. You recognise that you and other leaders are sometimes trying to cover too much when conducting learning walks (shorter visits to several lessons) or when checking on the work in pupils' books. This means that you are not always able to evaluate the impact of the training, guidance and support provided to teachers.

You, other leaders and governors now have a more accurate understanding of how the attainment of pupils at St Chad's compares to that of pupils nationally. For example, you know that more pupils in the school reach the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check than they do nationally. You are also keenly aware that standards are not as high in mathematics as they are in reading and writing and that not all of the most-able pupils at St Chad's make good progress. You are using your improved understanding of pupils' achievement to determine priorities for teacher training and support. For example, teachers are receiving good support from a mathematics consultant who is helping them to teach mathematical reasoning and problem solving skills more effectively. Teachers are also improving their skills in setting work at the right level of difficulty for pupils of different ability. During my visit, the most-able pupils in several classes were persevering with mathematical challenges which required them to think carefully and apply their knowledge in different ways. This deepened their understanding and helped them to make good progress.

You now meet every half term with each class teacher to discuss the progress of pupils in their class. This means that any pupils who are underachieving are quickly identified so that appropriate support can be put in place. Careful records are kept of these meetings so that teachers and leaders have a clear record of what has been agreed.

Following leaders' attendance at a seminar run by HMI in the region, the quality and impact of teachers' marking is improving. Teachers are now looking more closely at pupils' errors so that they can quickly clear up any misconceptions. They are also providing clear feedback on what pupils need to do to improve their work. There are some examples of pupils taking on board their teacher's advice and this is helping them to make better progress. However, teachers' expectations are not consistent across the school and so some good advice goes unheeded.

Governors have an accurate understanding of the attainment of pupils and how this compares to pupils nationally but some are less secure in their evaluation of pupils' progress from their different starting points. They know how pupil premium funding is spent but are not clear about the impact of different initiatives on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Governors are making more regular visits to the school. This is helping them to develop a more thorough and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors provide some challenge to school leaders by asking questions and requesting information. However, they have not ensured that their role in evaluating the impact of planned improvements is set out clearly in the school action plan.

External support

Since the section 5 inspection, the local authority has provided an increased level of support to the school. A school improvement adviser (SIA) regularly visits classrooms and looks at the work in pupils' books as well as considering the school's information about pupils' progress. He meets each half term with you and governors to evaluate the progress made against the priorities for improvement. As a result, the local authority now has a more accurate and thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The SIA has commissioned appropriate support to help the school improve. For example, a Local Leader of Education (LLE) has helped you to make improvements to school systems for checking on the work of teachers. A mathematics consultant has been effective in helping teachers to become more confident in meeting the demands of the new primary mathematics curriculum.

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

The letter has been copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools