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24 April 2015

Mr Marcus Elder
Headteacher
Holy Trinity Primary School
Cecil Street
Bury
Lancashire
BL9 0SB

Dear Mr Elder

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Trinity Primary School, Bury

Following my visit to your school on 23 April 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 January 2015. 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 the skills of middle leaders are developed so that they play a greater role in improving the quality of teaching by:
 - giving teachers clear feedback following the monitoring of books and planning
 - taking on a greater role in writing plans to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics and English
- make sure those pupils who are not making the expected progress in mathematics and English catch up quickly
- give pupils frequent opportunities to develop their writing skills.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher as well as the leader for English. I also met four members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I spoke to a small group of pupils to gather their views about the school's progress. I evaluated your school improvement plan and took account of your most recent data on pupils' achievement. I looked at minutes of governors' meetings. I also looked at records of your checks on teaching. We visited each classroom to talk to pupils and observe teaching. I also spent time looking at a range of books from a number of classes.

Context

Since the last inspection one teacher and one teaching assistant have returned from maternity leave. A new parent governor has been appointed to the governing body and will take up her position on 1 May 2015.

Main findings

The recent inspection held no surprises for you, the deputy headteacher or the governors as you know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Nonetheless, you have not been complacent and have continued to build upon and implement a number of significant changes to secure the path to improvement.

Your relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching, supported by the recently appointed deputy headteacher (September 2014) is having a positive impact. For instance, changes to how the teaching of phonics is planned and delivered, as well as recent and continuing support from a lead practitioner from a local primary school, is resulting in rapid improvements. Your own data show that three times as many pupils are now on track to achieve the expected standard in the phonics check compared to last year.

Your actions to tackle the issue of pupils finding work too hard or too easy are at an early stage. Teachers are using mathematics assessments with more confidence and have recently had training to enhance their skills; this is helping them to match work more accurately to the needs of pupils. The marking and feedback policy that you introduced in September is continuing to develop and teachers are using it to help their planning of lessons. Nonetheless, pupils report a mixed picture. Some pupils in Year 6 were full of praise for their teacher who they say is providing challenging work in mathematics, while other pupils in Key Stage 2 say that work is often still too easy.

You have taken innovative steps to give pupils greater time and opportunity to practise their reading. The introduction of individually designed story telling chairs for each classroom is helping to raise the profile of reading across the school; pupils say that they are inspired to read as a result. You have also refurbished the school library and are in the process of purchasing new books that are matched to the

needs and interests of pupils. Pupils also say that the recent 'book swap week' encouraged them to read a broad range of literature. You have taken steps to raise the profile of writing throughout the school by introducing writing journals and treasure boxes of inspiring writing materials. However, opportunities for pupils to write frequently to apply their skills are not being developed consistently across the school.

The mathematics and English leaders are eager to play their role in helping to steer the school towards the improvements required in their subjects. They have been industrious, since their appointment to their roles in September, and have supported you in the introduction of a number of key actions. However, their impact on improving the quality of teaching is not yet fully developed. For instance, their monitoring of books and planning in February has not been followed up with actions to support or challenge teachers and consequently improve the quality of teaching. Furthermore, the lack of subject specific improvement plans means that the nuts and bolts of improving mathematics and English are not fully addressed. As yet you have not allocated leaders in other curriculum areas, although the planned appointment of Key Stage leaders in the forthcoming weeks will further enhance leadership within the school.

Your own data show that improvements in teaching are beginning to impact on the progress that pupils are making. For instance, the percentage of pupils making more than expected progress in writing in Key Stage 1 has doubled since the recent inspection in January. However, the consistency of these improvements across the school is patchy and a small but significant number of pupils have not made progress since September.

Governors are unwavering in their support of you and the staff of the school. They are sharply focussed on the task at hand and have the skills to support the school on its journey. In their desire to improve, they have recently initiated a review of governance and are awaiting the recommendations to act upon. Governors have an honest and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and challenge you appropriately as to the impact of your actions. In their own words 'they are looking for solutions that will result in sustainable improvements not a sticking plaster'.

Pupils are pleased with the changes that you have introduced. They talk with enthusiasm about the new story teller chairs in their classroom and how they enjoy using the new challenge areas. The school council take their role in making 'important decisions' seriously and speak with pride about how they are helping to plan a new playground. Pupils also appreciate the efforts that adults are now making to provide them with a wide range of after school clubs and are excited about representing the school in a forthcoming choir competition.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

You and your staff have welcomed the support and challenge from the local authority. The links brokered with a local school have had an immediate impact on helping to improve the quality of the teaching of phonics. You are also developing links with the leadership of the support school and your recent joint learning walk has helped to further identify areas for improvement as well as confirm your own analysis of required actions.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Bell

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy