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25 June 2015

Mrs W Nelder
Headteacher
Churchfield Church School
Burham Road
Highbridge
TA9 3JF

Dear Mrs Nelder

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Churchfield Church School

Following my visit to your school on 25 June 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 March 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the sponsor 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:

- all staff follow the school's marking policy so that pupils know how to improve their work as quickly as possible
- the school's development plan needs to clearly show what success will look like when the actions identified in the plan have been successfully completed to the required standard
- all staff act as good role models for writing to reinforce pupils' learning of letter formation
- more opportunities are exploited for staff to learn from good and outstanding practitioners
- all policies that are provided for, and used by the school, reflect the latest government guidance.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the two assistant headteachers, two class teachers, five members of the local governing body, representatives of the Diocese of Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust (the sponsor) and a national leader of education (NLE) to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Similar discussions were also held with the school leaders for literacy, mathematics, early years and the special educational needs learning coordinator. The school development plan was evaluated. The inspector visited the classrooms of all year groups during the inspection and reviewed a sample of pupils' books. An evidence pack produced by the school to show improvements they had already made was also considered.

Main findings

There has been a big cultural shift in the school since September 2014. A greater emphasis has been placed on raising standards. Teachers now expect higher quality work from pupils.

Staff training and working alongside colleagues from Holy Trinity School, Yeovil, has improved staff self-esteem and increased the consistency of teaching. Class teachers now work together more closely, which is enhancing their professional expertise and improving the quality of teaching. For example, class teachers are watching each other's lessons more frequently and looking at the quality of the work produced in order to help each other to raise the standards of pupils' work. They are becoming less reliant on senior leaders and external advisors to tell them what needs to improve and how to bring this about.

Marking and feedback to pupils is enabling them to have a better understanding of how to improve. As a result, pupils in most classes are making better progress in reading writing and mathematics since the section 5 inspection in March 2015. However, not all staff are following the school's marking policy. This is not helping the pupils in these classes to know how to improve their work as well as others.

Since the last inspection, staff morale has been boosted. Staff, the local governing body, and families have had a greater say in how the school should and could improve. For example, everyone involved with the school has had the opportunity to help shape the school development plan. They greatly appreciate this. Subject and area leaders have devised their own development plans that link directly with the overarching school one. This has helped them feel more confident about how to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Individual members of the local governing body have been allocated the role of monitoring the work for each main strand of the school's development plan. Again, this is helping them to be clear about what everyone needs to do, what focus future activities need to have, and by when. The school's draft development plan concentrates on the right things that will help the school to improve. Senior leaders are aware that it needs to be amended so that members of the

local governing body can hold subject and area leaders more robustly to account for their work. In particular, it needs to make it absolutely clear what success will look like when the actions identified in the plan have been successfully completed to the required standard.

To help raise standards further, the school is continuing to look at ways of increasing its collaboration with other schools. In mathematics, during this inspection monitoring visit, teachers from the local secondary school were working alongside the class teachers in Year 6. Pupils were seen to be excited and engrossed in completing a range of tasks, including trying to work out, 'Who kidnapped Snowy?' In order to complete the task the pupils had to solve a variety of mathematical problems using a good range of different mathematical skills and techniques. The benefit of this joint working approach was that teachers from the secondary school could get to know the skill levels of pupils and share mathematical approaches with their primary colleagues in a purposeful and meaningful way. As almost all Year 6 pupils will attend the secondary school in September 2015, it meant that pupils could get to see and work with their new teachers, helping to reduce any anxiety for when they move school. Although staff have benefited from working with colleagues from Holy Trinity School, the staff, particularly those in the early years, have not had enough opportunities to see outstanding practice in a wider range of schools with a similar catchment area and size.

The quality of handwriting in the vast majority of pupils' books has considerably improved since the last inspection. Staff are ensuring that there is a greater emphasis on using the cursive script as defined in the school's writing policy. Leaders are aware that inconsistencies remain and that more needs to be done to ensure that all pupils write as fluently and confidently as they are able. Some staff do not always have good enough handwriting to demonstrate to pupils the correct way to form their letters. Staff are aware of this and time is being made, for example at the start of staff meetings, for staff to hone their handwriting skills. The school has invested in an electronic version of their preferred writing script. Staff are increasingly using this in their classroom displays and notices to help reinforce its use by the pupils.

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

The school has needed, and received since September 2014, high-quality and extensive external support from the Director of Learning and Achievement of the Multi Academy Trust (the sponsor). In addition, the school has benefited from high-quality coaching and school-to-school collaboration with a national leader of education (NLE) and her staff from The Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School in Yeovil, which is a teaching school.

Staff at Churchfield School are aware of the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education published in March 2014. However, this guidance and the further update published in March 2015 are not reflected in the school's safeguarding policy. This is because the local governing body are obliged to use the model policies provided by the Multi Academy Trust (the sponsor), which have not been kept up to date by the sponsor.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny

Her Majesty's Inspector