

6 July 2015

Mrs Claire Berry
Headteacher
St Michael and All Angels CofE (Foundation) Primary School
Meadow Close
Halifax
West Yorkshire
HX3 7QU

Dear Mrs Berry

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Michael and All Angels CofE (Foundation) Primary School, Calderdale

Following my visit with Philip Riozzi Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 3 July 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the 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 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 leaders' monitoring activities delve deeply enough into the impact that systems and strategies are having on pupils' progress.
- Ensure that reports to governors from leaders and consultants evaluate robustly the progress the school is making and enable governors to hold leaders to account for the difference their actions are making.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your deputy headteacher, two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan. You accompanied me on a tour of the school and we visited classrooms to look at pupils' learning during which a selection of pupils' work was scrutinised. I looked at a range of documents, including records of the school's monitoring activities, documents relating to pupils' current levels of attainment and minutes of governing body meetings.

Context

Since the inspection, two members of staff are currently on long-term absence. A newly qualified teacher and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator will be leaving at the end of this academic year. Leaders have awarded a teaching and learning responsibility allowance for a teacher to lead mathematics. The school has appointed a new teacher to lead English who together with three other new teachers will take up their posts in September 2015.

Main findings

Leaders, governors and the local authority are in no doubt the inspection judgement was the correct one. Leaders have shown determination and enthusiasm in getting on with addressing the issues raised by the inspection. They have set about a range of monitoring activities including work scrutiny, checking teachers' planning, lesson observations and learning walks. Although these checks have focused on ensuring teachers comply with agreed policies, they have not dug deeply enough into the difference these actions are making to pupils' progress. For example, the school has reviewed its approaches to the teaching of spelling. However, work in pupils' books shows that the strategies adopted by teachers are not always effective, because they correct pupils' spellings for them rather than expecting pupils to identify and check basic spelling for themselves. As a result, teachers' marking, both in English and mathematics, does not always identify important aspects of pupils' work that need to improve or errors in their understanding.

Leaders have taken robust action to address the weakest teaching. They have improved checks to ensure the safety of pupils. Governors are fully apprised of the action taken to address areas identified in the inspection and some of the safety issues identified, were addressed immediately after the inspection.

Initial indications from moderated data and teacher assessments show that standards in each key stage have improved since last year. While leaders are heartened by these improvements, they are clear there is further to go to ensure all pupils are working at their full potential and have work that meets their needs and challenges them to make the best progress they can.

In their improvement plans, leaders have set out appropriate actions to address teaching and improve pupils' achievement. While there is a clear focus on data to track pupils' progress, there is not enough clarity about what improvements will look like in pupils' work and in lessons for governors to check on the effectiveness of leaders' actions. Similarly, documentation and reports available to governors are too descriptive and do not evaluate precisely the impact leaders are having.

External support

The local authority has supported leaders in undertaking work scrutiny and monitoring activities. However, there is further to go to ensure these checks drive improvement and have greater impact on pupils' progress. The school has commissioned support from a National Leader of Education and is working with the local cluster of schools. There have been initial meetings to look at plans for improvement. Nevertheless, there has been little action from these partnerships that has resulted in tangible impact on improving the quality of teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Calderdale and the Diocese of West Yorkshire and The Dales.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector