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8 July 2015

Mrs Deborah Thompson
Headteacher
St Andrew's CofE VA Primary School
Ecton Brook Road
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Dear Mrs Thompson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Andrew's CofE VA Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 July 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 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:

- continue training for teachers and teaching assistants so that they make the best use of schemes to improve pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- regularly review the use of specific schemes and ensure that assessments are accurate
- ensure that the action plan makes a clear distinction between actions and monitoring and identifies who is responsible for these

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with: you; the Key Stage one coordinator; the subject leaders for mathematics and English; the special educational needs

coordinator; a representative of the local authority; and the Chair and vice-chair of governors. I accompanied you on a tour of the school to see the learning that was taking place. I held brief informal conversations with a few pupils when I visited their lessons. I looked at a range of documentation including the school's action plan, records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching, records of work completed with two local schools, staff training records and minutes of meetings of the governing body.

Context

Since the last inspection, you have restructured your leadership team. In addition to your role as headteacher, the leadership team now comprises: two assistant headteachers, one with responsibility for inclusion and one with responsibility for mathematics; and leaders for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The Key Stage 2 leader has responsibility for English. You have also appointed two new teaching staff.

Main findings

Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the priorities for improvement of the school and have substantial plans in place on to how to address them. The systems you introduced earlier in this academic year to improve reading, writing and mathematics have become established. As a result, pupils are making better progress. Leaders have clear strategies for identifying and addressing key areas for further improvement, such as the quality of writing, especially of boys currently in Year 2. Your Key Stage leaders have carefully reviewed the curriculum and supported teachers with their planning so that these pupils will receive the support they need to make progress quicker.

You have also invested significantly in selecting additional resources to support achievement in reading, writing and mathematics so that a comprehensive range of interventions are in place for next academic year. Subject leaders consider carefully the individual needs of pupils when choosing specific schemes. Teaching assistants play a very important role in the delivery and assessment of the schemes. Leaders ensure that teachers and teaching assistants receive essential training so that the schemes are used to their full potential and enable pupils to do well.

Your special educational needs coordinator reviews regularly and often the progress of pupils who need extra help. This means that the support they receive is adapted if needed so that they do better. She uses successful strategies so that assessments of pupils' work are accurate.

Leaders complete regular and thorough monitoring of the quality of teaching. They give teachers concise feedback, identifying areas of strength and for development. You have high expectations that teachers act promptly on this feedback, and you

provide teachers with appropriate support and training as needed. As a consequence, the quality of teaching continues to improve.

You have organised 'book look' sessions, when teachers look at each other's marking and feedback in pupils' books. These sessions have been very helpful for sharing good practice and ideas so that the use of high quality marking and feedback is becoming more consistent. Teachers are focussing more on helping pupils to improve their spelling, grammar and punctuation. Pupils correct their work accurately and regularly and teachers check that they have done this properly. The quality of pupils' responses to additional written tasks and challenges is continuing to develop alongside more routine opportunities in lessons for them to do so.

Leaders have high expectations that pupils complete pieces of extended writing in all subjects. Leaders coordinate opportunities for pupils to do this so that skills and knowledge they are developing in English are used in other subjects. You have introduced evidence portfolios which contain examples of pupils' writing in different subjects, enabling them to make links with the areas of focus in English lessons and to see the progress they are making.

The governing body are clear about the priorities for the school. Governors are experienced and well-informed so that they are able to ask leaders relevant questions and hold you to account for the school's performance. They have revised their committees appropriately to support the rigorous monitoring of progress in addressing the areas for improvement. Governors also provide the school with good practical support. They give valuable feedback after their visits to the school, for example, on developments in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Governors contribute helpfully to staff training and actively support work to boost opportunities for most able pupils. The governing body works well with the local authority and appreciates the support they receive, including training opportunities.

The school benefits greatly from its work with two other local schools. You provide regular opportunities for your staff to work together with those from the other schools in order to share good practice. This has helped the improvement of the quality of marking and feedback and the accuracy of assessments. Leaders are proactive in forging further links as needed, for example, to see specific schemes being used for improving handwriting in practice. Leaders anticipate further challenge such as needing to increase provision for pupils with English as an additional language, and organise relevant training opportunities in readiness.

Your action plan addresses the areas for improvement specifically. There are clear and quantifiable milestones which give details of intended outcomes. However, the milestones are quite infrequent and it would be helpful to give an indication of the interim monitoring that does take place and the steps taken when progress towards addressing a target might not be on track. You specify key questions in the plan which usefully define how monitoring is going to be carried out. It would be clearer

if actions and monitoring were detailed separately and to identify who has responsibility for actions and for monitoring progress.

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 receive good support from the local authority. Leaders have received valuable training from the local authority to develop their leadership skills and action planning. The school has an excellent opportunity to work on a project, funded by the local authority, to improve literacy.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser
Her Majesty's Inspector