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Mrs N Tomlinson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Tomlinson

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

Following my visit to the school on 20 November 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 June 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 in order to become a good school.

Evidence

I held meetings with six governors, two representatives of the diocese and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken to improve the school since the last inspection. I met with you and senior leaders to talk through the actions you have already taken to continue the school's improvement. We talked through some of the changes you have made to teaching and learning as we toured the school.

Main findings

The governing body and senior leaders have been on a journey of improvement and the school was brought out of special measures in June. The journey did not slow

down after the inspection in June and you started immediately to refine your plans to tackle the new areas for improvement.

As we walked around the school we saw examples of pupils' writing across the curriculum. Links to history, in particular, are being exploited well. For example the *Beowulf* poem from Anglo-Saxon England was used very well as the inspiration for pupils' writing, as was a topic about animals during wars. These topics resulted in high-quality writing in different subjects. The senior leaders' actions to improve pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation are reflected in the higher quality of writing displayed around the school and in pupils' books. Punctuation now has a higher profile in and around classrooms.

Standards at the end of Year 6, in 2015, rose in reading and writing but dipped in mathematics to be well below the national average. This was, in part, because of the lack of skills and knowledge that pupils acquired as they came through the school, meaning that by the time they started Year 6 they had too much to catch up. The staff have been trained in how to improve their teaching of mathematics, which is beginning to show in improving attainment across the school. The teacher who leads mathematics has been trained in how to lead the subject and, according to the school and local authority, has an accurate view of how the subject is taught and is in a good position to make further improvements.

Senior leaders are making great strides in creating a learning culture in school in which all staff learn from each other and respect each other's teaching. There is a system, for example, where three teachers plan a lesson together and jointly evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching on pupils' learning. In the first half term the focus was on the level of challenge for all pupils. As a result staff have learnt from each other, shared their good practice and have improved the level of challenge in some lessons.

Members of the governing body are knowledgeable and committed. Vacancies are quickly filled and new governors are sought to fill any gaps in skills or knowledge in the full governing body. A new governor, for example, has taken up the oversight of health and safety because of an identified need. Governors are more proactive and have improved their oversight of teaching and learning and their understanding of what is happening in school. They knew for example about the changes being made to writing and to grammar, punctuation and spelling and some of the impact of these changes. Governors tour the school and the classrooms, look through pupils' work and visit lessons; as a result their oversight of teaching and learning has improved.

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 diocese is highly supportive of the school and its transformation over the last two years. It has helped to improve the school's ethos, and links with the community including the church. It has also helped staff to think more deeply about ways in which deprivation can be tackled and how disadvantaged pupils can be enabled to flourish. The diocese has enabled the headteacher to attend leadership training in how to successfully lead a faith school. The impact can be seen in more opportunities and spaces for pupils to think and reflect.

The local authority provided intervention prior to the inspection. Since June it has scaled back this work and taken up more of an advisory and supporting role. The three governors brought in while the school was in special measures have stayed as part of the new governing body. The local authority advisers have helped staff to make sure their judgements about teaching and standards are accurate. They have also helped individual teachers to improve their teaching. Other authority services have also been effective in providing useful help and guidance, such as governors' services, personnel and finance departments.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Cheshire.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr

Her Majesty's Inspector