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26 April 2016

Mrs Sue Henderson  
Headteacher  
St Helen's CE Primary School  
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WF9 4EG

Dear Mrs Henderson

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Helen's CE Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 18 April 2016, 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 second 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 trust are now taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- provide more opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills during topic work
- continue to ensure all pupils are sufficiently challenged in lessons, including more-able pupils
- continue to support the new deputy headteacher and subject coordinators in further developing and improving teaching, learning and assessment
- ensure that the school website contains the most up-to-date policies and it is clear when policies will be reviewed and amended.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, your deputy headteacher and three other subject leaders. I undertook a learning walk with you and we briefly visited the Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 classrooms to sample pupils' work. I met with three members of the governing body, a group of key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils, the director of the Enhance Academy Trust (formerly known as the Wakefield Diocesan Academy Trust) and the school improvement partner. I evaluated the school action plan and other monitoring evidence, including minutes from governing body meetings, monitoring of teaching, safeguarding policies and the notes of visit from the school improvement partner.

## **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit in October 2015, there have been a number of staff changes. The Year 3 teacher is currently on long-term absence. The Year 4 supply teacher is now a permanent member of staff and your Year 5 teacher has left. A Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) took place in January 2016 and judged religious education provision to be 'good'.

## **Main findings**

Despite recent staffing difficulties, you and your staff have redoubled your efforts and resolve in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection in March 2015. You are more focused on making sure that actions taken have the desired positive impact on pupil progress. Consequently there are signs of improvement taking place.

In samples of writing that we looked at, it was clear to see that pupils' presentation and the accuracy of their writing is starting to improve. Pupils I spoke with have noticed that many of their teachers have higher expectations of them. There is a greater focus on accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers also run the 'Unfinished Work Club' to ensure pupils complete written work and rise to these new, higher expectations.

More care is taken to make sure teachers maximise writing opportunities following exciting trips and experiences. Pupils in Year 1, for example, had produced some impressive pieces of writing following their trip to the Thackeray Medical Museum. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their writing when using their topic books and you recognise the need to address this.

Your deputy headteacher now has a clear understanding of her role and responsibilities. As a result of her work, and the work of your school improvement partner, the quality of teaching is improving and teaching assistants are more regularly supported and guided. Pupils I spoke with say that lessons are usually

challenging. However, you correctly identify that there is still a way to go to make sure that all teachers provide work that is challenging for all pupils, including more-able pupils.

Valuable opportunities are provided for subject coordinators to visit other local schools to see good practice. These visits have energised and enthused staff and have started to raise the confidence levels of subject coordinators. Subject coordinators are becoming more effective at checking how well pupils are achieving and more adept at analysing and using assessment information. Your deputy headteacher recognises that further work is needed to refine and improve the new assessment and recording approaches currently being developed. This assessment information does not always accurately capture how well pupils are progressing over time.

Attendance initiatives continue to promote the importance of good attendance to both pupils and their parents. As a result of an increased number of letters home, home visits and the introduction of an online rewards system, the attendance of an identified small group of pupils who were persistently absent has improved. Sensible steps have been taken to improve procedures for ensuring the safe collection of pupils who are late leaving school. Parents now have to sign a log book when collecting these pupils. Pupils no longer wait in reception to be collected. There are also improved records of conversations staff have with parents. However, these changes have not been reflected in the current safeguarding and security policies on the school website. The online policies do not make clear when governors will review and update the policies. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has planned training later this year to help staff better understand and deal with the challenges faced by pupils with particular types of special educational needs.

Governors have significantly raised their game since the last monitoring visit in October 2015. The rapid improvement group (RIG) has a clear and accurate handle on how well the school is progressing. They are more probing in their questioning and take nothing on face value. They are keen to see for themselves the evidence that progress is taking place.

### **External support**

The trust has worked hard to clarify the role and responsibilities of their school improvement partners (SIP). This is now better coordinated. Regular SIP visits are providing valuable support and training to teachers, subject coordinators and senior leaders. This has included brokering visits to other schools to see good practice. There are emerging signs that this work is starting to have a positive impact on the way some subject coordinators plan and monitor teaching. However, you and your governors rightly recognise that there is still some way to go to ensure that this is consistent across the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**