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Sarah Whitlock
Principal
St Mary's CofE Primary Academy, Burton Latimer
High Street
Burton Latimer
Kettering
Northamptonshire
NN15 5RL

Dear Miss Whitlock

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's CofE Primary Academy, Burton Latimer

Following my visit to your school on 14 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 and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the acting vice principal and other senior and middle leaders, the chair of the governing body, the vice-chair and another governor, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I toured the school with you, spoke with pupils about their work, and scrutinised their books. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I also scrutinised school documentation relating to attainment and progress. The single central register was checked.

Main findings

Since your arrival, you have set out a clear and well-articulated vision for improvement in this school. You have been successful in gaining the trust and commitment of the staff team to realise this vision in the classrooms with the pupils.

Since the last monitoring inspection, you have acted decisively to address the areas for development identified in your section 5 inspection report. Your plans focus correctly on improving the quality of teaching so that pupils make better progress in their learning. Timescales for improvement are suitably concise so that areas for development improve quickly. It is clear that the governing body know the financial cost of bringing about the necessary improvements. Governors fully understand their strategic role in holding you to account for your work. They regularly come into school to check improvements for themselves. However, not all actions you plan to take have precise and quantifiable outcomes. As a result, the effectiveness of the plan is somewhat limited.

You have developed a much more robust system for checking the progress and attainment of pupils. Your new systems are still in the early stages of development. However, your middle leaders already have a much clearer understanding of the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. They regularly check how well pupils are doing through looking at pupils' books and observing teachers and pupils in their classrooms. They have become much more robust in their analysis of areas of strength and development. As a result, they challenge their colleagues to improve their work much more consistently.

You have improved the quality of teaching through careful analysis of individual teachers' strengths and weaknesses. You have put together bespoke plans that address their training needs. Teachers have many opportunities to work with experts and consultants to improve their effectiveness in the classroom. A programme of coaching by senior leaders is also supporting improvements in this area. As a result, teachers have gained a much better understanding of the precise learning needs of their pupils. Their planning for learning is beginning to close the learning gaps in mathematics, reading and writing. Pupils themselves welcome the increased challenge and say they enjoy it. You are beginning to see the impact of improved teaching in the progress pupils are making, particularly in reading where progress is now more consistently good. Progress in mathematics and writing is less consistent in different year groups.

External support

You have sought out and increased the level of external support to help you improve the quality of teaching and learning. You have worked alongside the headteacher from Park Junior School to check the quality of teaching and learning. Support from the diocese has also helped you to moderate and endorse the quality

of your judgements. You have bid successfully for funding to purchase consultant support. This has been effective in increasing teachers' planning skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Jan Connor
Her Majesty's Inspector