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Debbie Williams
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Dear Mrs Williams

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wenlock Church of England Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 23 June 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2016. 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.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that precise targets related to pupils' outcomes are included within the school improvement plan to facilitate the accurate monitoring of performance.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher. Further meetings were held with other senior leaders, the subject leader for English, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I also undertook a tour of the school with you and the deputy headteacher to review the quality of pupils' work in English.

Context

A new deputy headteacher was appointed at the start of the spring term. There are currently three vacancies on the governing body.

Main findings

Priorities contained within the school improvement plan are appropriate. The timescales for action are realistic and dates for completion facilitate the implementation of improvements. Roles and responsibilities are clearly identified to provide clear lines of accountability. However, targets to measure performance are too general. They are not linked closely to pupils' outcomes to allow for effective measurement of success and increased levels of performance.

You have generated a clear sense of purpose among a strengthened senior leadership team. Together you are working hard to turn the weaknesses seen at the previous inspection into strengths. Discussions with you and scrutiny of monitoring documentation confirm that the quality of teaching is improving. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are higher in English and mathematics. This is clearly evident in pupils' literacy books in many of the classes. For example, in Year 3 and 4, most pupils are developing a neat, cursive style in their handwriting. However, this is not necessarily the case in Year 5, where presentation is haphazard and letter formation and handwriting are often untidy. Weaknesses in reading lead to pupils having difficulties in using more complex vocabulary in their writing. The quality and consistency of marking and feedback are generally good across the school and particularly effective in Year 6, where pupils respond very well to clear guidance on how to improve the quality of their writing.

The English literacy subject leader is quickly tackling weaknesses in the teaching of reading. The implementation of more precise reading records and a greater emphasis on guided reading are having a positive impact on pupils' progress and enthusiasm for reading. The most able pupils from Year 6 gained much from attending a local book event with pupils from other schools.

In partnership with your deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, you have reviewed the current methods of recording pupils' progress against age-related expectations in English and mathematics. Changes have been made, and recent external moderation confirms that the information being gathered is accurate. You are right to highlight that more work is yet to be done before a robust and effective assessment system is fully implemented at the start of the next academic year.

Good work has been achieved in the use of pupil premium funding to narrow gaps in achievement for disadvantaged pupils. A full review is under way and teachers' assessments indicate good levels of improvement in outcomes for these pupils on the previous year.

A comprehensive review of governance is fully under way but yet to be completed. However, the governing body is making a number of changes to its working practices and procedures. As a result, governors take a greater role in monitoring school improvement. Improving levels of information about pupils' progress enables them to ask challenging questions of school leaders with greater confidence. Teamwork is a strength, and governors demonstrate strong levels of commitment to ensure the school's success.

External support

Appropriate levels of support from the local authority have been forthcoming. These include regular visits by the school improvement officer. Staff training in mathematics and computing is planned. Furthermore, you are making good use of existing links with other school professionals and the local teaching alliance to support the further development of staff. Diocesan advisers provide effective levels of training and support for governors.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of St Alban's and the director of children's services for Luton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann

Her Majesty's Inspector