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Mr Stephen Scott
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Scott

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St George's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 January 2017, 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 May 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in May 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- develop the role of teaching assistants across the school to ensure that they have a consistently good impact on the progress that pupils make.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and the senior deputy headteacher, the two deputy headteachers, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the headteacher of the partnership school to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school

improvement plan and subject-specific action plans were evaluated. I visited every classroom in key stages 1 and 2 to look at learning with members of the leadership team. I also looked at a small sample of pupils' books. I spoke to parents and pupils during the day to gather their views about the school.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the senior leadership team. A new headteacher and senior deputy headteacher were appointed in January 2017. The school has entered into a partnership with a local outstanding school. The existing two assistant headteachers have been promoted to the role of deputy headteachers.

Main findings

The new headteacher and the senior deputy headteacher have taken swift, effective action to improve the school since their appointments. They benefit from the excellent support provided by the partnership school and its headteacher. Parents recognise the changes that have happened swiftly to make the school a better place. They appreciate the constant visible presence of the new headteacher and senior deputy headteacher. They feel reassured that the school is improving. As one parent put it, 'It's just perfect now'.

Within a very short amount of time, senior leaders have made incisive judgements to inform and fine-tune school improvement priorities. As a result, the actions they have taken have already started to have a clear early impact on all aspects of the school's work. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching across the school and are clear on what they need to do to improve it further.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving but there is still variability in terms of the impact that teachers have on pupils' progress, which is also variable. The deputy headteachers have been relentless in their drive to improve the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. They have very sound subject knowledge and are supporting staff to further develop knowledge and skills. Leaders recognise that planned actions to improve the quality of teaching need to be further refined so that teachers have a manageable number of priorities to work on in order to improve their teaching within appropriate deadlines. Teachers are working hard to improve their skills and are confident that leaders are steering them in the right direction.

Since the previous inspection, teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils to benefit from problem-solving and reasoning activities during mathematics lessons. For example, in Year 2, pupils were engaged in solving problems with fractions. Leaders have ensured that the teaching of writing is improving. There were examples of high-quality writing seen in books, particularly in Year 6. Teaching and learning still require improvement because too many pupils lose focus

in lessons and opt out of the learning. This limits the progress that they make. Teachers sometimes fail to notice that pupils are not paying attention and they do not refocus or capture their interest swiftly enough to move their learning on.

Teaching assistants provide good care and pastoral support for pupils. They have warm, caring relationships with pupils. However, there are weaknesses in subject knowledge in terms of mathematics and English teaching which need to be addressed. Teachers also need further guidance on how to deploy teaching assistants so that they can have the maximum impact on pupils' progress.

Governors have reflected on judgements made at the time of the last inspection and have improved their skills of governance. They have listened to good advice from the local authority and from the partnership school. They continue to support the school and its leaders and they have begun to challenge leaders more rigorously and hold them to account for pupils' progress. They have ensured that statutory safeguarding requirements are met. Since the previous inspection, the chair of the governing body has made sure he keeps a regular check on records relating to safer recruitment. Governors are clear on how pupil premium funding is being spent and on the impact it is having. The external review of the additional funding helped governors to understand the sorts of questions they need to ask to hold leaders to account.

External support

Leaders are using external support extremely well. The headteacher and senior deputy headteacher have come from an outstanding local school. They bring a wealth of expertise and skills with them to St George's. Leaders and governors are using the support from the partnership school very well. They are excited about the opportunities that partnership working is bringing and confident that the collaborative work will benefit their pupils.

The local authority provides good support. Leaders take advice and use it to help improve the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Ruth Dollner
Her Majesty's Inspector