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28 November 2012

Mrs K Johnston-Grant
Headteacher
St Nicholas Elstree Church of England VA Primary School
St Nicholas Close
Elstree
Borehamwood
WD6 3EW

Dear Mrs Johnston-Grant

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St Nicholas Elstree Church of England VA Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 November 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, to report on the findings of my visit. 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 September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders with responsibility for English and mathematics, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The inspector looked at pupils work in English and mathematics and evaluated the action plan.

Context

There have been no changes to the staffing since the previous inspection. Two governing body vacancies have been filled but one vacancy still remains.

Main findings

The action plan provides a clear structure for school improvement. Actions have been prioritised to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, with specific timescales set against realistic targets. These actions need to be fully embedded in classroom practice to ensure that all pupils achieve well in their writing and mathematics. Discussions with school leaders and those with specific responsibility for leading the teaching of English and mathematics believe that there is a sharper focus on improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils in all classes. However, their regular monitoring of lessons and pupils' books shows that inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking still remain.

Governors demonstrate a growing level of understanding about the school's strengths and weaknesses through focused visits and meetings with subject leaders. The action plan has been discussed at governing body meetings but a detailed review of the school's progress on the issues from the last inspection is yet to take place. However, governors have undertaken training to fill gaps in their knowledge such as safeguarding and finance.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- provide further training to teachers about how good feedback and marking can be used effectively to accelerate pupil achievement in writing and mathematics
- work with the local authority to provide governors with the necessary skills and expertise to monitor the school's work and ask informed questions of leaders about school performance.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has put in place a specific programme of support. It includes regular reviews by local authority improvement officers to ensure that the school quickly tackles the key issues from the inspection to secure the necessary improvements in pupils' outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector