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Mrs L Fitzpatrick
Great Marsden St John's Church of England Primary School
Trent Road
Nelson
Lancashire
BB9 0NX

Dear Mrs Fitzpatrick

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Great Marsden St John's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 December, 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 October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a member of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The inspector also held a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body. The school improvement plan was evaluated, and a range of documentation was reviewed, including the feedback to teachers following lesson observations, and records of monitoring activities and arrangements about performance management was discussed. The headteacher took Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) on a tour of the school to look at teaching and learning and the changes in staffing since the inspection.

Context

Since the inspection the school has seconded a teacher to be the assistant headteacher for the rest of the year. Currently one member of staff is on long-term leave and another is due to take long-term leave shortly. There are a small number of vacancies for foundation governors that the governing body is currently seeking to fill.

Main findings

The school accepts that the outcomes and priorities from the recent inspection are the right ones, and has made suitable plans to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in identified areas. The school improvement plan has been updated and milestones for checking improvement in the achievement of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils have been added. However, criteria to enable leaders and governors to measure how much progress is being made need sharpening further.

Governors have discussed the improvement plans drafted by the headteacher and the local authority and have planned training for the New Year to support them in their ambition to improve. The teaching and learning project brokered with the local authority has identified specific needs and actions the school needs to implement to bring about improvement. Activities are underway to check teachers' planning and pupils' work and these are timetabled regularly by senior leaders. The headteacher is intending to work with another local headteacher in order to support her in the journey to being judged good at the next inspection.

As part of their performance management all teachers have individual targets that directly relate to improving the quality of their teaching and accelerating pupils' progress. Senior leaders are regularly checking the work of staff; however, they acknowledge there is more to do to make sure issues identified through monitoring are followed up robustly.

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

- sharpen aspects of the school improvement plan to include milestones for the progress of all pupils and show clearly how leaders and governors will measure and evaluate the impact of the school's actions
- ensure the accuracy of teacher assessments so that information about pupils' attainment and progress is reliable and enables teachers to be held accountable for improvement
- ensure that all monitoring activity focuses on identifying and tenaciously following up issues to ensure required improvements are brought about with sufficient urgency.

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

External support

The local authority advisor and the headteacher have worked in partnership to coordinate a range of useful support for staff. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching and strengthen leadership. The local authority has linked the school with a local headteacher in order to help the school continue improving. There is training for the governing body planned for the New Year.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector