

PROTECT-INSPECTION

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18 December 2012

Mrs Beryl Morgan
Headteacher
St John's VA Church of England Primary School, Thornham
Thornham Lane
Slattocks
Middleton
Manchester
Lancashire
M24 2SB

Dear Mrs Morgan

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

Following my visit to your school on 17 December 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 October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, governors, a group of pupils and representatives of the local authority (LA) and diocese. The inspector evaluated a range of documentation including: the school improvement plan; monitoring reports and records of lesson observations. In addition, the headteacher took the HMI on a tour of the school to look briefly at teaching and learning and the changes made to provision since the inspection.

Context

Since the previous inspection, two members of staff have resigned and a new temporary appointment has been made with responsibility for leading the curriculum.

Main findings

Following the inspection in October, senior leaders and governors have responded positively to the school's priorities and taken appropriate action to lay the foundations for improvements in strengthening leadership and in improving the consistency of teaching and learning. As a group, they have responded with suitable urgency and have taken immediate action to:

- establish a more rigorous system for monitoring the quality of teaching
- implement a timetable of monitoring activities that include review meetings, work scrutiny analysis and discussions with pupils
- conduct a review of current timetables and subject coverage.

The school improvement plan has been suitably revised with appropriate actions, timescales and intentions. Systems to check more rigorously on teaching and learning are gathering pace. However, further improvements are required in pinpointing with precision the achievement of pupils and groups within lessons and in measuring the impact of teaching on pupils' progress more accurately.

Senior leaders are not complacent and recognise that the next challenge is to press ahead with their plans to develop the role of teaching assistants and to seek further agreement with teachers on what constitutes effective practice in pupils' learning.

Governors are aware of what goes on in school and are knowledgeable about the school's priorities. As a group, they are committed to see the school move forward and are increasingly confident to act where necessary to support improvements or to question proposals.

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:

- strengthen the monitoring of teaching with a clearer focus on the achievement of pupils in lessons.

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

External support

The support from the LA and diocese has been well tailored to meet the school's most urgent needs. The impact of this work can be seen in the increasing confidence of senior leaders and in the school's recent improvements. All parties are committed to developing the skills of leaders and managers at all levels to enable them to monitor the quality of provision and use the outcomes of this to inform strategies for further improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector