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11 December 2013

Mrs Lorraine Wright
Headteacher
St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Church Road
Portbury
Bristol
BS20 7TR

Dear Mrs Wright

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Portbury

Following my visit to your school on 11 December 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 2013. 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. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that all teaching staff maintain the momentum of change, which has begun with enthusiasm and rigour.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also joined you on a learning walk around the classrooms where we looked at the pupils' books together. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Context

There have been no staff changes since the inspection, but a new class teacher has been temporarily appointed for January 2014 to teach the Year 5/6 class.

Main findings

The school has wasted no time in establishing an action plan that is fit for purpose. Its impact can be measured directly across to the areas which were identified as requiring improvement at the inspection. By creating a checklist of what is expected in a good or outstanding lesson, teachers now have a common understanding of the key features of successful teaching and learning. The use of a video camera to record lessons and peer observations has had a strong impact on raising teachers' awareness of a lesson where all pupils are fully engaged in their learning. The marking policy has been reviewed and a scrutiny of workbooks indicates that teachers are marking in a consistent manner. The use of 'sticky' notes to explain to pupils what they are learning is ensuring that there is a clarity and focus to lessons. The introduction of writing books, which are used weekly for independent pieces of work is enabling a systematic check of pupils' progress over time. The literacy leader has been given time out of class to support colleagues in setting medium-term and long-term goals in this subject. This has resulted in each teacher developing a one-year plan to ensure all aspects of writing are covered in each year group. Additional literacy resources have been ordered across the school. In Reception the children have been organised into small groups, each of which has a key worker. This means that there is now a greater focus on meeting the needs of each individual child. Outdated and inappropriate equipment have been removed from the outdoor area and new resources have been ordered. Governors report that since the inspection the energy of the headteacher has been 'infectious' and they are confident that all staff are 'on board' for the improvement journey. However, they are very clear that this enthusiasm and openness to change must be maintained by all members of the team to secure good quality education for all the pupils.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

High quality support provided by a leading literacy teacher from the local authority has resulted in lessons being observed that have greater pace and more challenge for the pupils. All teaching staff in the Reception class have visited an outstanding Early Years provider and this has motivated them in their interest to get it right for their children. Extensive coaching from the local authority Early Years Foundation Stage adviser has improved the quality of planning and the use of learning dairies to record the progress the children make over time. The 'Learning Exchange' advisor from the local authority has provided the headteacher with a high level of challenge

and has supported her well in creating the detailed school improvement. Governors keep in close contact with the local authority and are appreciative of the expert advice which is always available.

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

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector