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Ms Janet Kneale
Executive Headteacher
Canon Sharples Church of England Primary School and Nursery
Whelley
Wigan
Lancashire
WN2 1BP

Dear Ms Kneale

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Canon Sharples Church of England Primary School and Nursery, Wigan

Following my visit to your school on 12 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. Leaders and governors should take further action to:

- ensure governors keep at the heart of their discussions the progress made by pupils for whom the pupil premium is intended
- ensure the impact of any initiatives undertaken is quantified in terms of outcomes for pupils.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the head of school and yourself; five members of the governing body, including the Chair; the senior leadership team; and a representative of the local authority. The school's improvement plans were evaluated. I also toured the school.

Context

As part of a pre-planned staff reduction process, three teaching assistants have left since the October inspection. At the time of this visit, the special educational needs coordinator had given notice she will leave at the end of this term.

Main findings

As a result of measures you have put into place, leaders and governors know what they need to do to enable the school to improve. Key stage and subject leaders, for example, have been instrumental in securing additional funding and engaging inspirational visitors, paralympians for example, to improve the written and spoken English of pupils. While it is clear to leaders how both teachers and teaching assistants will improve their practice, we agreed a greater emphasis was needed to quantify the improvements expected from pupils as a result of such work.

Nevertheless, improvements in pupils' learning have been noted already. For example, the latest screening of Year 1 and 2 pupils' knowledge and understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) shows improvement from earlier in the term. As a result of recent rigorous testing of pupils in Year 1, teachers in this year group are now in a better position to bring about swift improvements in pupils' knowledge and understanding of number in mathematics.

Governors, like leaders and yourself, were unsurprised at the outcome of the inspection. This is because both the head of school and yourself had evaluated strengths and weaknesses accurately. As a result, the improvement plans in place are most appropriate. Governors are better equipped to ask probing questions and are doing so increasingly well. Those spoken with were confident in reporting the high expectations in terms of pupil progress now demanded. They were less confident, however, in reporting how they would measure the impact of the use of pupil premium funding.

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

The local authority and diocese rightly took steps to reorganise the leadership of the school following the resignation of the previous headteacher in May 2013.

The expertise you are bringing as a national leader and from your own school is building up well both the confidence and ability of leaders at Canon Sharples to stand on their own feet. Already, leaders understand the importance of checking the quality of work undertaken, rather than just checking actions have been carried out. As a result of feedback given by both yourself and the head of school, staff are clearer how they are to improve their own subject knowledge and involve pupils' more in their own learning. In addition, the opportunities of working with leaders

from your school to check standards of pupils' writing have the potential of providing leaders at Canon Sharples with an accurate picture of pupils' skills and abilities. Quite correctly, the local authority is confident in your ability to strengthen leadership and governance in this school.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector