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Mrs Paulette Bailey
Headteacher
West Ham Church Primary School
Portway
Stratford
London
E15 3QG

Dear Mrs Bailey,

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to West Ham Church Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 February 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- undertake the recommended review of governance, ensuring that any recommendations are implemented by 1 September 2014
- undertake the recommended review of pupil premium spending and provision, ensuring that any recommendations are implemented by 1 September 2014
- rewrite the post-Ofsted action plan, ensuring that targets are precise and that clear arrangements are in place to monitor the plan
- arrange for the support from North Beckton Primary School to start as soon as possible.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school development plan and the post-Ofsted action plan were evaluated. Accompanied by yourself or the deputy headteacher, I visited all classes in Key Stage 2. During these visits, we scrutinised teachers' planning, the quality of work in pupils' books, and the quality of teachers' marking.

Main findings

The school's post-Ofsted action plan, written on a template provided by the local authority, is still in draft form and is incomplete. Targets for improvement are imprecise or missing. It is unclear how, and by whom, actions are to be monitored and evaluated.

It is disappointing that the review of governance has not taken place. The Chair of the Governing Body, a former headteacher of a good school, offers valuable experience and expertise. However, he rightly recognises that governance could benefit from external appraisal and additional support. It is imperative that the review takes place as quickly as possible, so that any recommendations can be in place before the start of the new academic year.

It is also regrettable that the review of pupil premium spending and provision has not taken place. The 'Headteacher's Strategy Papers', introduced in September 2013 and revised after the inspection, identify pupils who are at risk from underachievement for any reason. These documents are useful in directing teachers and teaching assistants to intervene and give support when and where it is needed. Some of the pupil premium funding is being used to teach all Year 5 and 6 pupils in smaller English and mathematics classes. The school's ambition for raising achievement across the whole school is understandable. However, the funding is not being targeted sharply enough at the pupils for whom it is intended. Appropriate systems for measuring the impact of the funding are not in place.

The quality of marking seen in books during our visits to lessons was too variable. This was also the case in the section 5 inspection. Some helpful marking was seen, where pupils' mistakes were challenged and their corrections showed that they had learnt from their errors. However, too much marking seen was cursory. In some cases – for example, in punctuation tasks seen in Year 6 books – exercises were simply ticked. We agreed that lack of challenge was suggested by the fact that, in some books, pupils were repeatedly getting everything correct.

Pupils' conduct seen in classrooms during the day was very positive. Pupils were, without exception, willing and prepared to participate in learning. At times, though, their attention drifted; this happened when teaching lost their interest because of unnecessarily long explanations or when the work was not challenging enough.

Our discussions during the day left me in no doubt about your commitment to the school and your desire to improve outcomes for all pupils. You enjoy similar commitment and support from the deputy headteacher, governors and local authority. The school's leadership is united in its ambition and desire to move forward together. However, in the three months since the inspection, action has not been taken quickly enough.

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

Following the section 5 inspection, the school explored the possibility of engaging support from an outstanding school within the Diocese of Chelmsford. However, it was subsequently decided that this support should come from an outstanding school in the local authority. An arrangement has now been agreed with North Beckton Primary School, but this support has yet to start.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector