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Headteacher
Kate Clark
St Matthew's Church of England Aided Primary School and Nursery Centre
Church Road
Donnington Wood
Telford
TF2 7PZ

Dear Mrs Clark

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Matthew's Church of England Aided Primary School and Nursery Centre

Following my visit to your school on 24 October 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 January 2014. 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:

- improve teachers' knowledge of how to teach the technical aspects of writing, in particular grammar.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and with five governors including the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plans were evaluated and I considered a range of documents including records of your checks on the work of teachers and on pupils' progress. I also made brief visits to classrooms.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, two teachers have left the school and three new teachers have been appointed.

Main findings

You remain resolute and determined to move the school to good quickly. The staff and governors have taken the recommendations from the previous inspection on board fully and are ambitious for the school to do well. A clear direction is provided by you for staff and you have the confidence of the teachers and governors. Agreed school systems have greater rigour and key records are maintained appropriately. Governors and all leaders work together to take decisive action when teaching is not leading to pupils making good progress.

You know where pupils' attainment is lower than it should be and have suitable strategies to remedy this. Each action in the school improvement plan is linked to the recommendations in the inspection report and those from your careful analysis of data. It contains precise milestones linked with pupils' progress and attainment. This helps you and the governors to check more easily on the extent to which actions have been successful.

After the inspection, members of the governing body quickly realised that they needed to check more carefully to ensure that your actions and those of other senior leaders were making enough of a difference to pupils' learning particularly for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Governors are now asking more searching questions about teaching and the rates of pupils' progress. They are involved in weekly scrutinies of pupils' work and conduct visits to classrooms to check the work of staff. Consequently, governors are better able to support and challenge you and other senior leaders.

You and other senior leaders have set up programmes of support and training to improve teaching, particularly in mathematics. The local authority mathematics specialist is working with teachers to improve teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics. Impact is clear to see in pupils' books, with marking clearly demonstrating that teachers are better able to pick up pupils' misconceptions and to pinpoint the next small steps in their learning. Better use is made of techniques to assess pupils' ability to reason and to explain their thinking.

However, you and other leaders are aware that the same improvement cannot be seen in writing. For example, too little attention is paid to teaching pupils how to use grammar and other cohesive techniques effectively in their writing. Instead, teachers focus too much on other features such as writing in a particular style. Some pupils' books show that, in a short space of time, they are required to write in two or three different ways and are not given enough time to show that they can write well in any one style such as story or diary writing. Books also show that some pupils' grammatical errors are not identified and so errors persist from one piece of work to

another. Displays around the school do not help pupils understand how the English language is structured.

External support

The local authority provides a suitable level of support and has been instrumental in helping the school to make connections with other schools to share good progress. Training for teachers has contributed to the improving profile of teaching and has made explicit what the expectations are for good teaching. Middle leaders have had the opportunity to improve their leadership skills and governors benefit from a range of support and training. The local authority's regular review meetings about the school, at which the Chair of the Governing Body and the headteacher are present, are rigorous and tackle the right issues.

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

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector

Cc. Chair of the Governing Body
Cc. Local authority
Cc. Diocese