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Mrs Amanda Healey  
Headteacher  
St Bartholomew's CE Primary School  
Ann Street  
Brighton  
BN1 4GP

Dear Mrs Healey

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Bartholomew's CE Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 30 April 2015, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in July 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 the leadership and pace of improvement, by ensuring:

- improvement plans incorporate the recommendations of the recent pupil premium review, and show clearly throughout, how governors will check and measure success, referring closely to improvements in pupils' achievement
- senior leaders check that staff implement improvements consistently well
- leaders' judgements about teaching always consider how well this promotes pupils' achievement
- high quality early years provision is maintained and developed, inside and outside
- governors develop a systematic approach to evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher. We visited classrooms and looked at some pupils' work. I also met the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body with another governor and the clerk, a representative of the local authority and the headteacher of St Nicolas and St Mary CE Primary School. I examined a range of documents including the school's updated improvement plans, teachers' plans for pupils' learning, information about pupils' achievement and leaders' checks on teaching, governing body records and local authority reports.

## **Context**

The vacant position of Key Stage 1 leader is being advertised for the second time. Governors have appointed a new clerk.

## **Main findings**

Since my first monitoring inspection, you have taken effective action to remedy shortcomings in the school's initial response to the section 5 inspection, increasing the urgency and focus of your approach. However, much remains to be done.

A suitable action plan is now in place. This refers specifically to the areas for improvement identified by the section 5 inspection, with clear responsibilities and timescales. I am pleased to see the plan includes precise targets for pupils' achievement this year and states how leaders will check success. However, the document still requires greater detail about governors' oversight, and a sharper focus on pupils' achievement as the key measure of success. Furthermore, the plan does not incorporate well enough, recommendations following the review of the school's use of the pupil premium (additional funding to support pupils entitled to free school meals and those who are looked-after).

With the clear aim of improving teaching and leadership, you are taking full advantage of local authority consultancy and partnership with St Nicolas and St Mary CE Primary School, a good school. Valuable collaboration between senior leaders in the two schools has helped identify how you can accelerate improvement at St Bartholomew's. To their credit, teachers are also receptive to the advice and guidance provided, and show a lively interest in developing their practice further. You regularly check lessons and feed back to teachers, but leaders and consultants are too ready to describe teaching as "good" without checking for sustained improvement in learning for all groups of pupils.

The feedback teachers provide to pupils about their work continues to develop, although this does not yet provide consistently clear guidance to pupils about how to improve. Although teachers' feedback to pupils is a priority for the school, senior leaders do not check this well enough.

You have established accurate systems for teachers to assess pupils' achievement in the revised National Curriculum, sensibly checking this information before recording it. You have developed your regular meetings with teachers to focus more precisely on the progress of individuals, and you now require teachers to maintain a clear plan showing how they will improve the learning of pupils discussed. However, you do not check sufficiently that teachers implement thoroughly, all the actions agreed.

It is pleasing that you are promoting similar consideration of the needs of individual children in Reception class, providing opportunities for staff to observe provision in good settings at other schools. However, you have not ensured that good, overall provision is maintained while adults focus increasingly on individual children's needs and interests. Furthermore, improvement to learning out-of-doors, which was the focus of a recent visit by staff to learn from practice at another school, is not sufficiently evident.

In Year 6 and Year 2, more pupils are making better progress from their varied starting points. This reflects improvements in teaching noted in your own records and local authority reports. Overall, pupils' achievement in the school is improving, although this remains variable between subjects and groups of pupils.

You have continued actively to promote the characteristics of a "good learner", with teachers referring to these increasingly well, stimulating pupils' interest and endeavour. Recently refreshed displays show how these ideas have increasing meaning for pupils, who are now busy considering their own suggestions, to add to those promoted by leaders.

You are successfully developing the effectiveness of middle leadership, including in mathematics where the leader is now more active in checking teaching and pupils' work, before advising teachers about next steps. A new way of planning learning in mathematics, where teachers set out increasing levels of challenge, helps them provide more effectively for pupils of all abilities.

Governors are committed to the improvement of the school, including their own effectiveness, and useful training is taking place. It is good to see governors' committee structure has been rationalised and a skilled, experienced clerk recruited. Records of meetings show governors beginning to state their own requirements for leaders' reports and asking questions with greater challenge. Governors' visits are increasingly regular and purposeful, although still not focused sufficiently on checking the impact of leadership on pupils' learning. Furthermore, governors are not yet developing a sufficiently systematic approach to evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school. A relevant action plan is steering the development of the governing body, but the role of governors remains unclear in the school's overall improvement plans.

## **External support**

The local authority continues to provide wide ranging and effective support, working closely with the diocese, including to recruit additional governors with relevant skills and experience. Local authority advisers provide useful guidance for the improvement of teaching and assessment, although some feedback to teachers lacks sufficient challenge. Helpfully, the local authority and diocese brokered the highly effective partnership with St Nicolas and St Mary CE School, which is supporting well, the development of leadership at all levels.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**