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22 September 2014

Mr Mark Hewitt
Head of School
St Mary's Lewisham Church of England Primary School
329 Lewisham High Street
London
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Dear Mr Hewitt

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Lewisham Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 September 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 April 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:

- provide clear milestones and more precise indicators of success so that progress toward planned actions can be monitored accurately
- involve the governing body in the process of monitoring and evaluating the action plan
- link clearly the planned actions to those areas for development cited in the last inspection report.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the executive headteacher, other senior leaders, a range of staff, and representatives from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and held a telephone conversation with a

representative of the diocese. The school's development plan was evaluated and I looked at other relevant documentation. A sample of pupils' work was collected and scrutinised.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been a number of changes to staffing. Two supply teachers have been employed and the recruitment of some permanent staff is planned in the near future. You have created a new post of 'Senior Leader for Teaching and Learning'. An external review of governance was carried out in June 2014.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, senior leaders and governors have carried out much work to improve the school. Together with the executive headteacher, you have worked hard to provide clear guidance for staff. There is a clear focus on consistent practice throughout the school and this is checked through frequent monitoring. Staff welcome this clarity and understand what is expected of them.

You have developed a detailed plan to address the areas for development highlighted in the last inspection report. Some of the indicators of success are not precise enough for progress to be monitored accurately. In addition, some of the timescales for completion could be broken down into smaller elements so that any deviation from expected progress can be identified quickly. In a small number of cases, it is not clear how the planned actions will address the areas for development cited in the last inspection report.

You have reviewed, simplified and updated many of the school's policies and procedures. You have followed this by training and discussion with staff. This has been aided by effective support that has been provided through your partnership with an outstanding school. You have established a close and effective working relationship and actions are tailored to the needs and context of each school. Joint training has led to the formation of peer-to-peer support. This is valued highly by staff in both schools in the partnership, who view it as being of mutual benefit.

You have introduced a new planning template that places greater focus on meeting the needs of the more able pupils, more effective use of teaching assistants and having clear expectations of pupils when completing tasks. This is starting to have an effect on the improving teaching and learning, but you recognise the need for more development in this area.

You have developed a simple mechanism for improved feedback to pupils and a process to ensure that they read and respond to comments made. Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that this practice is still developing; further monitoring is planned for

during the autumn term. You have shared a clear expectation that pupils complete an extended piece of work every day, and two extended pieces of writing each week. Separate and detailed plans for action in the area of reading and writing exist, but these are not referenced in your school development plan.

Teaching assistants now provide targeted support for pupils to help develop their understanding of the text they are reading. You monitor closely the guided reading sessions for all pupils and the subsequent feedback that you provide to staff is improving their quality. The 'calculation' policy has been reviewed and re-written to reflect the new mathematics curriculum and is in the process of being implemented.

Staff use information about pupils' progress more consistently and it is also the topic of regular leadership discussion. This could be enhanced further by rapid analysis of data to identify trends and patterns across the school.

The school's policy on behaviour is now implemented more consistently. The governing body has been proactive in evaluating this area. You have reorganised lunchtimes so that all pupils no longer share the same lunch time. Staff have been trained on managing difficult behaviour and targeted support has been provided for particular groups of pupils. While many of these initiatives are still in their infancy, they are beginning to demonstrate positive impact.

A detailed external review of governance has provided clear recommendations to make the governing body more effective. Significant work has been done by governors including creating governor links to key areas for development and an audit of governors' skills. A governor is now responsible to oversee sports funding; an evaluation of its impact will take place through the relevant sub-committee. On-going training and work with a National Leader of Governance is enabling governors to ask probing questions and hold school leaders to account.

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 school values the external support it receives from the local authority and the diocese. Both were responsible for creating the partnership between the school and an outstanding school. The local authority has increased the level of support to the school that the school receives. In the period since the last inspection and the summer term, this took the form of supporting the leadership of the school. It is now aimed rightly at helping the school to improve the quality of teaching. It has also supported the governing body through training and through the review of governance. The diocese supports the leadership of the school with a specific emphasis on maintaining the school's distinct Christian ethos and the further development of its religious education provision. The diocese also supports the governors of the school through on-going training.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lewisham, and the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education.

Yours sincerely

Sai Patel
Her Majesty's Inspector