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Mrs Paula Scattergood
Headteacher
Christ Church CofE Primary School
William Street
Fenton
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST4 2JG

Dear Mrs Scattergood

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Christ Church CofE Primary School, Stoke-On-Trent

Following my visit to your school on 30 April, 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 on 22-23 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:

- give greater prominence to identifying how pupils, particularly the most able, can excel
- enhance the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage environment, particularly outdoors
- within the school's improvement planning, highlight more clearly the key indicators that will be used by the governing body to regularly check on the progress being made in addressing all improvement priorities and
- ensure all senior leaders have increased opportunities to be involved in making decisions.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other leaders. A meeting was held with two governors, including your Chair of Governors, and a representative of the local

authority. The school improvement plan, information related to the tracking of pupils' progress and the minutes of the governing body meetings were evaluated. Short visits were made to 7 lessons to observe teaching.

Context

Since the last Section 5 inspection two teachers with promoted posts have left the school. A temporary teacher is currently teaching the Year 3 class. An assistant headteacher responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has been appointed and will commence working in the school in September. Two teaching assistants have left the school and have been replaced by three colleagues that are new to the school. As a result of the review of governance, the size of the governing body is being reduced and several committees have been merged.

Main findings

Teaching is improving because less time is being wasted on activities unrelated to learning. There is more evidence of competition being used to increase the pace of learning; for instance, Year 2 pupils enjoyed competing with each other to identify the most sounds. But there is still more to do: for example, time is wasted because the routines for pupils returning to class after break take too long. Marking is having more impact because all staff follow the school's policy closely. This marking is more effective because pupils are being provided with dedicated time to respond to the feedback on what they need to do to improve. Behaviour has also improved because staff are more consistently implementing the school's behaviour management policy and greater emphasis is being given to rewarding good behaviour.

You are correctly focussing on ensuring teachers are more effectively planning to meet the needs of higher ability pupils. A very promising development is the approach that allows pupils to make guided choices about the level of work they undertake. One of your able pupils was clearly pleased that he was able to opt to undertake the more challenging, 'platinum' level mathematics. As result of the improvement you have made, you are anticipating a rise in the numbers of pupils attaining the higher levels in both the Year 2 and Year 6 external assessments.

During our walk around your school you demonstrated that you know what is needed to improve teaching further; for instance, that there is scope in some lessons to improve the pace of learning. In addition, opportunities are missed to make clear to pupils, particularly the most able, how they can excel for example through the use of display and more regular use of the 'visualiser' technology. The Early Years Foundation Stage is a relative weakness largely because the entire environment, particularly outdoors, does not fully support children's learning. It was reassuring to hear that you have appointed a new assistant headteacher who is to focus on improving this provision.

Since the Section 5 inspection there is compelling evidence that you taking action to improve leadership and management. For instance, you are challenging any under-performance and you have acted quickly to restructure your leadership team so there is less reliance on yourself and your deputy. Although you are consulting with staff about any changes, most decisions are being made by you and your deputy. Major change is possible from September when the size of the senior leader team will have increased to five.

There is good evidence that you are regularly checking the progress the school is making in addressing all the issues identified at the section 5 inspection. Your new improvement plans have been enhanced through the inclusion of indicators that can be used to regularly check the impact of the improvements you are making on the quality of teaching and the progress all pupils are making. Although your improvement plans are very detailed it is not easy to see the key information that is to be used by the whole Governing Body to regularly check on the progress the school is making.

Governance has improved since the last Section 5 inspection. Governors are taking steps to improve leadership in the school; for instance the decision to introduce a rolling programme whereby leaders will be questioned about the areas of responsibility. A review of governance has been quickly undertaken and the recommendations are being implemented.

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 has organised a range of support largely through involving other Stoke-on-Trent schools. Since the Section 5 inspection you have been working with St John's CoE School, Trent Vale, to accelerate the rate of improvement. This work is overseen by a National Leader in Education who is the headteacher of St Mary's CoE, Tunstall. The improvements in the management of behaviour can be tracked back to the support provided by the local authority. The diocese has also provided important support; for instance, through helping to organise the review of governance.

The local authority has established a robust procedure for regularly checking the progress the school is making. This process is enhanced through the inclusion of representatives of the governing body and the National Leader in Education. It would be helpful if further support could focus on improving the Early Years Foundation Stage. The local authority has agreed to keep HMI informed of the progress the school is making by sending the termly reports on the monitoring of teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Diocese of Lichfield and the Director of Children's Services Stoke-on-Trent.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector