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Charlotte Taylor
Headteacher
Holly Hill Methodist/CofE (Aided) Infant and Nursery School
New Street
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Dear Miss Taylor

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holly Hill Methodist/CofE (Aided) Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 16 October 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2015. 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 in order to become a good school. Plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take urgent action to:

- ensure that all senior leaders have the skills required to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement
- make sure that teachers in Years 1 and 2 plan activities that meet the learning needs of pupils of different abilities in reading, writing and mathematics and help all pupils to achieve well
- ensure that staff in the early years plan work that helps children reach a good level of development
- ensure leaders write a school improvement plan that identifies the precise actions that will be taken to raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and

mathematics, improve teaching and strengthen leadership. This plan should contain measurable success criteria against which success can be measured.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the teacher with responsibility for Key Stage 1, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. I also met with a representative from Birmingham Education Partnership and head of school at Colmore Infant School. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including the latest information about pupils' achievement. You and the teacher with responsibility for Key Stage 1 joined me on brief visits to classes to talk to pupils about their activities. We also looked at samples of pupils' writing and mathematics work.

Context

There have been a number of staffing changes. You were appointed as the headteacher in September 2015. Prior to this you worked as a part-time deputy headteacher in the school. The governing body appointed a full-time deputy headteacher who joined the school in September 2015. You reorganised the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders at the start of the autumn term. The teachers with responsibility for English, mathematics, early years, pupils' achievement and pupils with special educational needs are new to their roles. At the time of this inspection two classes were being taught by temporary teachers. The governing body elected a new Chair of Governors in September 2015.

Main findings

You and other senior leaders have not responded with enough urgency to the weaknesses in teaching. As a consequence, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are not making enough progress in most year groups. Although a number of senior leaders have not had full-time teaching responsibilities since September, they have not used this time effectively. You and other senior leaders have focused on completing administrative tasks instead of improving teaching and raising pupils' achievement.

The unvalidated results of the most recent end of Year 2 teacher assessments show that last academic year, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school closed. A higher proportion of pupils reached the standards expected for their age than previously. Information for pupils in other year groups does not show similar improvements and is a cause for concern. The vast majority of children did not reach a good level of development at the end of Reception. At the end of Year 1, the majority of pupils did not acquire the skills and knowledge expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.

You and other senior leaders do not have effective systems in place for checking the work of teachers or for making sure pupils in all year groups succeed. Staff do not receive regular feedback on their work or advice on how to help pupils make better progress. Additionally, senior leaders do not make sure that all teachers consistently adhere to school policies. As a consequence, weaknesses in teaching and pupils' learning are not identified or tackled quickly enough.

During our brief visits to lessons, we observed pupils in Years 1 and 2 completing activities that were either too difficult or too easy. In one instance pupils were provided with a list of words to use in their writing. However, some pupils did not know what the words meant and were using them incorrectly. Pupils' writing showed weaknesses in punctuation, sentence structure and spelling. In mathematics, pupils in some classes struggled with basic number facts and there were insufficient opportunities for them to deepen their mathematical understanding. In the early years, children were not always clear about the purpose of their activity and their work did not always build on what they already knew, understood and could do. A few adults were observed effectively helping the youngest children to use the correct language to count and name different vegetables.

Work in pupils' books shows that teachers' expectations of pupils are low. For instance, pupils are frequently asked to complete simplistic activities, such as drawing pictures or copying words instead of developing their writing skills. Pupils are not encouraged to take pride in their work. We saw examples of pupils scribbling and not forming their letters or numbers correctly or neatly.

You and other senior leaders have undertaken a detailed and helpful analysis of pupils' performance in all year groups. You are planning to use this information during meetings with class teachers so that you can check the progress of individual pupils towards their learning targets.

The external review of the school's use of pupil premium has helped you and other senior leaders to identify how best to use this additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. The actions you have identified are generally appropriate but have yet to be fully implemented.

The members of the governing body have benefited from the external review of governance. This review has helped them to gain a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are committed to ensuring the school improves quickly. Governors have produced an action plan that makes clear what they will do to provide leaders with an effective level of support and challenge, and the training they intend to undertake. Governors have recently been made aware of the extent of underachievement in the school. They have set up a 'standards' group that will keep a closer check on the achievement of pupils.

The school improvement plan makes reference to the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. However, the plan does not specify the actions

that will be taken to raise pupils' achievement in all year groups or to strengthen teaching and leadership. Neither does the plan contain measurable success criteria. This makes it difficult for governors to check the difference school leaders are making to the achievement of pupils and to teaching in all year groups.

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

External support

The local authority did not provide school leaders with support after the full inspection in April 2015. The headteacher contacted the Colmore Teaching School Alliance and arranged for support and training for staff. This support has only just started and the impact yet to be seen. A representative from Birmingham Education Partnership recently met with the headteacher to discuss support requirements and the arrangements for evaluating the work of leaders and the impact of any support.

As a result of this inspection visit, the Colmore Teaching School Alliance and the representative from Birmingham Education Partnership have agreed to increase the level of support that will be provided to the school and to evaluate the impact of this on pupils' achievement, teaching and leadership before the end of the autumn term.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector