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14 November 2016

Mrs N Wood  
Executive Headteacher  
Middleton St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Moor Flatts Road  
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West Yorkshire  
LS10 3SW

Dear Mrs Wood

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Middleton St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 17 October 2016, 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 February 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in February 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors have not taken effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- improve the quality of teaching, including the support provided by additional adults so that pupils, including the most able pupils, are appropriately challenged
- ensure that all teachers consistently and effectively use the school's marking and feedback policy to help pupils make faster progress
- make sure that teacher assessments are accurate and reliable to help inform judgements on the progress pupils are making.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the head of school and other senior leaders. Together we undertook a tour of the school, visited classrooms, and sampled some of the work that pupils had done. I met with three governors and a representative from the local authority. I also evaluated the school improvement plan, other monitoring evidence including lesson observation records, minutes from recent governing body meetings and reports from the local authority officer.

## **Context**

There have been major staffing changes since the last inspection. The headteacher has retired and the then consultant headteacher is now the executive headteacher for the next two terms. The deputy headteacher is now the head of school and there are two new assistant headteachers. Two Year 1 and two Year 2 teachers have left, and one Year 4 and one Year 6 teacher have left, along with a teacher in Reception. New appointments include teachers in Reception, Years 1, 2, and 4 and a newly qualified teacher in Year 6 and one recently qualified teacher in Year 1.

## **Main findings**

Following the inspection in February 2016, there was a period of drift and time was lost in setting about tackling the weaknesses. Little tangible improvement was evident by the end of last term. Improvement plans were weak and actions leaders took lacked urgency and impact. You, as executive headteacher since September 2016, have achieved more in the last six weeks than leaders achieved over the previous six months.

You have kick-started the school's stalled improvement journey and brought a newfound momentum to the school. Plans are now useful tools for guiding the school forward. You are working hard to tackle many years of underperformance and weak accountability. Teachers are now accountable for the progress their pupils make and you have not shirked away from tackling poor performance to ensure that pupils get a better standard of education. You are rightly demanding higher expectations of staff and pupils. You and other leaders are rigorously and regularly checking on teaching, expecting improvements to happen rapidly.

You have raised the bar of expectations and other less experienced leaders are benefiting from your support and guidance. This is building leaders' capacity and confidence in leading the school forward. However, it was not possible to make up for the slow start by the time of this visit. Our tour around school confirmed that teaching across the school is not strong; nor is it improving fast enough. Teaching often lacks challenge, especially for the most able pupils, who describe lessons as 'pretty simple.' Some teachers are not using your assessment and feedback policy well enough to accelerate pupils' progress. Over a period of weeks, teachers repeatedly highlight the same weaknesses in pupils' work, but are ineffective in

helping pupils successfully tackle these issues. The support provided by additional adults is hit and miss and rarely supports the most able pupils. Additional adults are not clear as to precisely who and how they should be supporting pupils in some classrooms. Pupils' behaviour remains too variable across the school. Too often, classrooms are noisy, with pupils shouting out and being silly. This makes it hard for pupils to concentrate and learn. This is due to weak teaching and some pupils lacking the stamina and resilience to work for the whole lesson.

Governors have a clear and accurate understanding of the progress the school is making. They have rightly been frustrated by the slow progress following the inspection and are disappointed that greater progress has not been made since the inspection. However, they are encouraged by the quickening progress made during this term so far. Governors are increasingly challenging and use their wealth of educational experience to keep a watchful eye on the impact you are having on improving pupils' outcomes.

### **External support**

The more recently appointed local authority officer is providing effective and accurate support and challenge. The quality of this support is stronger now than it has been in the past. This support is helping teachers understand the importance of effective teaching day in and day out rather than performing one-off lessons for observations. As a result, careful consideration is now given to the progress pupils are making over time. However, you and the head of school have identified several instances where pupil assessment information is inaccurate and unhelpful in judging pupils' progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner, the director of education for the diocese of Leeds and the director of children's services for Leeds. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Phil Smith

**Her Majesty's Inspector**