

1 December 2010

Mrs R Perkins
Executive Headteacher
West Alvington Church of England
Primary School
West Alvington
Kingsbridge
TQ7 3PP

Dear Mrs Perkins

Ofsted 2010–11 best practice survey: school governance

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 November 2010 to look at school governance.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our publication about best practice in school governance. The publication will include case studies about individual schools. If West Alvington Church of England Primary School is included as a case study, you will have an opportunity to comment prior to publication. Individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the identification of features of best practice included: discussions with four governors, including the Chair and Vice-Chair, the clerk, representatives of the school council, the head of teaching and learning and the school improvement partner (by telephone); and scrutiny of a range of documents, including the minutes of meetings of the full governing body and of its committees.

Features of best practice

- The governing body works within a climate of openness where governors and staff have confidence in each other and are clear about roles and responsibilities. This enables the governors to carry out their work very effectively. The governing body is continually striving to secure excellence in all aspects of the school and is not satisfied with features being merely 'good'.
- The governors are exceptionally well organised with an annual cycle that sets out very clearly what needs to be done month-by-month and they receive very good support from the clerk. The committees carry out much valuable work in drawing up and reviewing policies and checking the

progress of the school, with appropriate reporting to the full governing body.

- Governors have good opportunities to see the school at work; several governors help regularly in classrooms and there are planned opportunities to meet staff and observe teaching and learning. They are thus well placed to see the impact of their decisions and are well known to pupils and parents.
- The governing body is closely involved in monitoring progress with the development plan through membership of teams linked with particular priorities that meet regularly to review actions taken and their impact.
- Governors strongly support the development of the leadership potential of school staff, for the benefit of the two schools in the federation as well as for the wider school community in the area and beyond.

Areas for development

- The governing body to consider establishing a more systematic and planned approach to evaluating and developing governors' skills.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop governance further.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Grahame Sherfield
Her Majesty's Inspector