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Mrs Geraldine Denham-Hale
St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School,
Marsh Road
Burnham-on-Crouch
CM0 8LZ

Dear Mrs Denham-Hale

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Burnham-on-Crouch

Following my visit to your school on 14 November 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. The headteacher and HMI walked the school together to observe pupils' learning in lessons. A range of documentation was reviewed, including the school's revised monitoring procedures.

Context

Since the last inspection, a new teacher has been appointed to teach in the Early Years Foundation Stage and coordinate the education of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Two existing members of the Governing Body have been appointed as the Chair and Vice-chair.

Main findings

Revised plans for raising achievement, improving teaching, leadership and management, including governance and developing the school's Christian ethos are in place. Plans include suitable actions, timescales, targets and opportunities for staff training. New procedures to monitor the impact of these plans and report progress made to governors every half-term are also in place.

Class teachers and subject leaders are now evaluating what actions they have taken since the inspection, reporting the impact this has had so far and outlining the next steps they need to take to improve their teaching further. The core elements senior leaders expect to see in all lessons have been agreed by staff during whole-school training. Lesson monitoring procedures have been strengthened in preparation for the next round of lesson observations. The Chair of the Governing Body understands the school's strengths and weaknesses, and the heightened role that must be played in monitoring the school's performance. Currently, four vacancies in the Governing Body limit its capacity to fulfil this role.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- check that revised monitoring procedures and periodic assessment data enable senior leaders and governors to illustrate the impact of their actions on improved outcomes for pupils
- focus your lesson observations and scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work on the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The Diocese and the local authority have contributed to revising the school's planning and monitoring. Further engagement with both sources of support would be beneficial at this stage. A further half-day visit planned for the spring term 2013 will enable HMI, the headteacher and the local authority to review the impact of this support. The date of this visit will be confirmed by HMI in 2013.

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

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector