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28 November 2012

Ian Robinson
West Monkton Church of England Primary School
School Road
Monkton Heathfield
Taunton
Somerset
TA2 8PA

Dear Mr Robinson

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to West Monkton Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Wednesday 28 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 and deputy headteacher, the literacy and numeracy co-ordinators, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. A telephone conversation was conducted with a representative of the local authority. The school development plan was evaluated and documentation about performance management and the monitoring of teaching was discussed. Inspectors also looked at minutes of governing body meetings and the Local Authority's proposal for brokered school to school support.

Context

One teacher went on maternity leave at the end of September and another teacher is due to go on maternity leave at the end of term. The deputy headteacher is on a phased return to work, currently three days per week, after an extended period of absence. This is being extended to a complete return to work before the end of term

and the deputy headteacher will pick up the Year 1 class affected by the maternity leave from January 2013. A part-time teacher has been appointed to cover the phased return and to provide additional support in Year 5 and Year 6 classes.

Main findings

The new headteacher is tackling weaknesses in achievement through a direct focus on developing the quality of teaching. He has used the recommendations from the section 5 report together with his accurate self-evaluation to set a firm direction for the school to become good. The school development plan has been updated and clearly articulates what is required. Performance management has been overhauled so that precise targets have been set for teachers which make them accountable for the progress their pupils make. Senior and middle leaders have been empowered to drive improvement and are, in turn, accountable for the quality of teaching of the staff they manage and support. Although monitoring and evaluation action is implied in the school development plan, these processes could be made more obvious so that leaders and governors can assess and plot progress more clearly. For example, while the plan has a strong focus on teaching it does not always identify the expected impact of proposed action on pupils' attainment and progress.

The governing body is finalising the external review of governance which was identified in the last inspection report. In the meantime, they have received training on the new system for tracking pupils' progress. This has increased their confidence in holding school leaders to account. Governor committees have been re-structured to share responsibility and accountability among the governor team. Newly introduced monthly monitoring meetings enable them to check and assess more frequently the action taken by school leaders and its impact on pupils' learning and progress. While the school development plan is effective in directing the work of the school, it would benefit from a clear timeline of improvement activity and key milestones so all know exactly what is to be achieved by a set time.

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:

- tweak the school development plan to more succinctly link planned action to pupils' attainment and progress
- identify clearly who will monitor and evaluate the proposed actions in the school development plan so that leaders and governors can accurately assess the progress that the school is making.

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

External support

The school draws effectively on the support from the Local Authority and school improvement partner. Immediate impact can be seen in the improvement in the quality of the school's action planning in literacy and numeracy. The current support plan brokered by the Local Leader in Education is focused on developing the quality of teaching. While it articulates clearly how this work will be supported, it does not set challenging enough expectations for the rate of progress that pupils need to make if they are to achieve well.

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

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson
Her Majesty's Inspector