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23 January 2013

Mr A Squire
Headteacher
Totnes St John's Church of England Primary School
Pathfields
Totnes
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Dear Mr. Squire

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Totnes St John's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 January 2013, 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 November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, representatives of the governing body, subject leaders for English and mathematics and a representative of the local authority. The school's action plans were evaluated. HMI looked at documents related to subject improvement and discussed the systems for reviewing the quality of teaching and tracking pupils' attainment and progress.

Context

Since the inspection, there have been changes regarding the subject leadership for English and mathematics.

Main findings

School leaders are checking the quality of teaching and improving it in a concerted way by observing teaching, visits to lessons to look at specific themes such as lesson conclusions, checks on teachers' planning and regular reviews of the progress pupils

are making. These activities and the different methods used to help teachers improve, including visits to see good teaching in other schools, are adapted to support each teacher. There is a clear focus on linking reviews of teaching to its impact on pupils' learning. Increasingly, staff are taking account of their shared responsibility for raising standards. The school's expectations of what pupils can achieve are rising. Senior leaders are clear about the need to ensure all pupils achieve well, including those capable of reaching the higher standards.

Improvement plans build effectively on whole school review. Planned actions are focused on the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. Suitable measures of success are identified. However, there is scope for specific targets to define how improvements will increase the proportions of pupils making more than the nationally expected rates of progress. Arrangements for checking whether the plans are successful are robust. Subject leaders are increasingly involved in making sure teaching is up to standard, supporting the work of colleagues and carefully tracking the progress being made by 'target' groups of pupils at risk of underachieving. They do not yet regularly report their findings to governors. Training has been organised to help all governors to increase their understanding of achievement data and a group has been set up to oversee the improvement agenda. This work is still at an early stage.

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

- establish clear, precise targets for how actions taken will bring about rapid progress for pupils of all abilities in each year group
- offer continuing support for governors in checking on improvements to pupils' achievement.

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

External support

The school actively draws on effective support from the local authority and links being established with partner schools. The local authority's adviser has provided good support to school leaders and staff in adapting its action plans. Its consultants have helped the governing body to carefully review its work. Support from the local authority is being used flexibly and is adapted according to the school's needs.

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

Yours sincerely
David Townsend

Her Majesty's Inspector