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25 January 2013

Mrs J Thorne
Acting Headteacher
Bishops Lydeard Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Mount Street
Bishops Lydeard
Taunton
Somerset
TA4 3AN

Dear Mrs Thorne

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Bishops Lydeard Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Friday 25 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 and senior leaders. I met with the Chair of the Governing Body and a group of governors. I had a discussion with a representative from the local authority and a local leader in education. The school action plans were evaluated. During a tour of the school with the headteacher, I talked to pupils and looked at their work in English and mathematics. During a meeting with literacy and numeracy leaders I looked at examples of teachers' marking in English and mathematics books.

Context

In the head teacher's absence, the deputy headteacher has been acting headteacher for two weeks.

Main findings

The acting headteacher has stepped up to the mark in leading the school. Governors have sensibly asked for more detail on the actions being taken to address the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. The acting headteacher has 'pulled out all the stops' to produce a more detailed school action planning document, which gives governors greater clarity with responsibilities and timescales. However, it is not always clear how the governing body will know and evaluate that actions taken are making a difference to the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.

Staff have benefited from training and support provided by school leaders and external consultants. This has developed their confidence in the teaching of reading. There is now a clearer focus than previously on making sure that all pupils read regularly. The training needs of teaching assistants have been addressed and changes made to the way they work. Support staff now have time to plan with teachers and are better deployed this term, by matching their skills to the needs of pupils. Leaders have focused on the way teachers' mark pupils' work, but there is still some way to go to achieve a consistent approach to marking in every class.

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:

- add a column to the school action plan which focuses on the impact of the school's actions and helps governors evaluate more closely whether these actions are being successful in improving teaching and raising pupils' achievement
- put up a chart/timetable so that all staff know the weekly focus of actions being taken to address the areas for improvement, such as scrutinising teachers' marking
- carry out regular lesson observations by senior leaders and give feedback so that all teachers have the appropriate small steps to work on which will help them to move their teaching to good or better.

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

External support

The local authority has linked the school with a local leader in education in order to support staff training and actions for improving teaching and learning. Whilst staff training has had a better focus than previously, joint lesson observations and developmental feedback to teachers by school leaders and the local leader have been slow to get going. The local authority sensibly recognises that should the acting headteacher continue to lead the school in the head's absence she will need

to be supported by an experienced deputy headteacher. There are plans to do this and also to increase the amount of support from the local leader in education. In addition, the local authority will provide teachers with regular opportunities to observe good practice in other schools.

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

Jane Neech
Her Majesty's Inspector