

Tribal  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 0117 311 5359  
**Direct F** 0117 315 0430  
**Email:** christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

2 May 2013

Mr Justin Heath  
Headteacher  
Holy Cross Church of England Primary School  
Belmont Road  
Uckfield  
TN22 1BP

Dear Mr Heath

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Holy Cross Church of England Primary School, East Sussex**

Following my visit to your school on 2 May 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 in January 2013.

**Evidence**

During the visit I met with you and the assistant headteacher, the English and mathematics subject leaders, the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plans and discussed your actions to date. We walked around all of the classrooms to sample teaching, look at pupils' work and talk to pupils.

**Context**

There have been no significant contextual changes since the last inspection in January 2013.

**Main findings**

You have taken the points raised in the last inspection and produced a plan to show what you intend to do to improve and when. This plan is very clear about the actions you intend to take but it is less clear about the reason why you are taking some of the actions. Our discussions showed that you had a good understanding of the

purpose of each activity but it will be useful, when monitoring the effectiveness of your actions, to be clear about difference they should make to the outcomes and experiences of pupils.

You have set yourself ambitious goals that you intend to meet at the end of this year. Remember that the purpose of this plan is to outline how you will get to be good. It makes sense to show this as a journey over the next two years, with clearly marked milestones along the way. These milestones do not always need to be based on pupils' performance data but ultimately you will want to show how you are improving rates of progress for different groups of pupils.

In my discussion with your English and mathematics leaders it was clear that the mathematics lead, who is also the assistant headteacher, has a clearer view of what needs to improve in her subject, and how she intends to do this. It will be important to provide opportunities for your English leader to develop her leadership skills. I know that you are looking to do this by providing her with the opportunity to work with a more experienced English leader from another school. I think this is a sensible way forward.

We spent a lot of time talking about ways you and your leadership team can build a culture where teachers have the highest of expectations. I was really encouraged to hear you talking so passionately about the moral imperative to ensure all pupils make at least good progress. You are aware of a culture in school where 'excuses' for poor performance are too readily accepted. I am confident after our conversations today that you will be determined to change that culture so all teachers reflect on their practice, rather than pupils' circumstances, when pupils make less than expected progress.

You are meeting regularly with all teachers to discuss the progress that different pupils are making. It will be really important that these meetings are used to enable both you and class teachers to analyse and fully understand the reasons why pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Asking difficult questions in these meetings will help focus teachers on the reasons why different groups do less well, the ways that they can adapt their teaching and the type of extra help pupils might need to catch up.

I was pleased to hear from your governors that you provide information about pupils' performance in an easier to understand format. I was also pleased to hear that the governors are making use of their own professional expertise in supporting and challenging the school. Governors are developing a policy and procedures to help them become more involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning. I know that some governors are concerned about how to do this work sensitively. The local authority is in a good position to give you advice on how this works in other schools.

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:

- sharpen the action plan to show the expected milestones over the next two years and the intended outcome of different actions
- ensure that all teachers recognise that the principle reason for underperformance is the quality of teaching and that they must first look at their own practice when understanding why pupils underachieve
- help governors develop a sensible strategy that allows them to see the impact of school improvement.

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

### **External support**

The local authority has been providing additional support to the school since before the inspection. They have provided a consultant who works alongside leaders to challenge and promote school improvement. The local authority provides subsidised consultant support for schools that require improvement. The school has used this to support senior leaders in developing their monitoring skills and developing school improvement systems.

The school and local authority are setting up links with a group of local schools. These links are designed to provide mutual support and challenge. The local authority is negotiating additional support from another school to help develop middle leadership.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex and as below. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**