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Mr S Wells
Kingsclere Church of England Primary School
Ash Grove
Newbury
RG20 5RE

Dear Mr Wells

Monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to a school requiring improvement

Following my visit to your school on 16 May, 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.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2013.

Evidence

During this visit I met with you, a group of senior and middle leaders, a group of governors including the Chair of Governors and a primary phase inspector from Hampshire local authority. We went on a tour of the school and visited classes in every year group. We reviewed the action plan and you showed me some records of lesson observations and examples of new policies.

Context

Since the inspection one teacher has left the school. At the time of the previous inspection the school was led by an interim headteacher. You were then deputy headteacher. You were appointed to the permanent post of headteacher in April. You have been in post for five weeks.

Main findings

Plans to improve the school are clear and focused with measurable outcomes and defined timescales. The action plan has been shared with all staff and everyone's responsibilities are clearly identified. Although it is too early to evaluate the impact of all the intended improvements, you showed me evidence that teaching is getting better and that teachers are being held to account for their work.

Your first priority has rightly been to improve the quality of teaching. You have introduced key principles for good teaching that you expect to see in every lesson. You understand where teaching is already good or better and where it needs to improve. You have made sure that common weaknesses such as questioning, marking and assessment are tackled in training sessions in staff meetings. Your lesson observations from the last few weeks show that these aspects of teaching are improving.

You are in the process of developing a better system for checking and analysing information about pupil progress. You have introduced a half-termly check on pupil progress, including meetings with teachers to discuss the performance of pupils in their classes. You have started to provide parents with better information about the progress their children are making and their levels of attainment. You have already received some positive reactions from parents who now have a much clearer idea about how their children are doing.

You have begun to strengthen leadership in the school, by reviewing and amending the job descriptions of those teachers with lead roles. School leaders know exactly what they need to do in their particular areas, such as improving the transition between the Reception Year and Year 1 and how to deploy teaching assistants to help pupils make better progress. School leaders told me they have been given 'very clear direction' and that they now all work better as a team. You have made sure that teachers and school leaders have been able to visit other schools to see good and outstanding teaching. You have assigned special projects to school leaders in order to develop their skills and expertise and to raise standards of teaching. For example, the school has introduced very useful 'Children's Target Booklets' which outline key steps in learning to help pupils progress through the levels.

Since the previous inspection, governors have focused on the key areas for improvement. They provide good challenge and support for the school. Governors have planned to hold weekly discussions organised around specific events on the school calendar. For example, they will be having a focused discussion about pupils' progress following the half-termly report to parents and the pupil progress meetings.

School leaders and governors are beginning to take effective action to tackle the areas identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- check that teachers are using the new marking and assessment system consistently, especially when they check learning during lessons and when they mark pupils' work
- make sure that all teachers adopt the key principles for good teaching
- confirm the specific responsibilities of senior and middle leaders and develop their skills in judging teaching and evaluating pupils' progress.

I will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection. My next visit in the autumn term will include joint observations of teaching, a review of the impact of the marking and assessment policy and a meeting with school leaders to evaluate the impact of their work.

External support

The school has benefited from strong support from the local authority, including an induction programme and mentor for the headteacher and visits to other schools. The local authority is planning a review of teaching and learning in July 2013. Other specialist advisory support is planned for English and mathematics. I recommend that this support continues.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector