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28 May 2013

Miss Claire King
Headteacher
The Priory Church of England Primary School
Wick Lane
Christchurch
BH23 1HX

Dear Miss King

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Priory Church of England Primary School, Dorset

Following my visit to your school on 22 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated.

Main findings

The school has responded quickly to the issues raised by the section 5 inspection. Staff have focussed on raising achievement, particularly in reading, as well as the effectiveness of marking and feedback to support further learning. There are clear improvements in the classrooms to encourage pupils to read and enjoy books. Reading journals are encouraging pupils to think more deeply about what they read. Pupils say that teachers' recent marking is helping them improve their work more.

The school's behaviour policy has been reviewed in partnership with parents and carers to strengthen actions and ensure follow-up is more consistent. Already pupils are saying that incidents of inappropriate behaviour are being tackled more consistently.

Secure assessment and tracking of pupil progress are in place to ensure that no pupil underachieves. The school's data suggest that pupils are likely to attain above the national average in their end of Year 6 tests and will have made at least expected progress.

The school has developed a single action plan to address issues from the recent inspection as well as to fulfil its vision of being a place of outstanding learning. Many different activities are described however it is not clear how all these activities will lead to consistently good learning throughout the school. Currently the plan does not spell out responsibilities of individuals well enough. Monitoring and evaluation are confused.

The Governing Body has recently reorganised into a different committee structure to ensure that members can give priority to monitoring pupil progress and the quality of teaching as well as dealing with other issues, such as buildings and personnel. Members are not yet fully confident that they have the necessary information and knowledge to challenge the school sufficiently. An external review of governance to support their development is recommended.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- work with the local authority to resolve personnel issues as quickly as possible to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching
- sharpen the current action plan, making sure that all proposed activities are leading to good learning and progress with clear success criteria. Clarify key dates and responsibilities, as well as monitoring and evaluation arrangements
- conduct an external review of governance, particularly focusing on supporting governors to hold the school more effectively to account for pupils' learning and progress
- clarify the roles and responsibilities of external partners to ensure that the support and challenge offered is coherent and effective.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Support for the school is not clearly thought through. The local authority has an accurate view of the school. It has provided specific subject support. However, the school expresses little confidence in its work. The school has developed a number of different external partnerships that it finds more helpful. The school has not developed a coherent plan of how the different contributions of these external partners will lead to consistent improvement. Leaders, including governors, should work with the local authority to clarify roles and responsibilities as well as the intended outcomes of any additional support and challenge that is provided.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen McShane
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter will be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Director of Children's Services for Dorset
- Diocese of Winchester