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Miss Carol Phillips
Headteacher
Bampton CofE Primary School
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Oxfordshire
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Dear Carol

Requires improvement: monitoring visit to Bampton CofE Primary School

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 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and the National Leader of Education (NLE) who is working closely with you. I also met with two governors, your English and mathematics leaders and I talked on the telephone to a representative from the local authority. I evaluated your action plans, read reports from the local authority and we discussed pupil's progress data. We walked around classes, looking at work in pupils' books and talking to pupils about their activities.

Main findings

Your improvement journey started before the last inspection. When you embarked on your headship, the local authority recognised that your school was at risk of failing and moved to ensure you had sufficient support from an NLE, who works with you each week. You have a good relationship with this experienced headteacher and I was encouraged to hear you debate and discuss issues today in some detail. Most of your staff are committed to improving. This was illustrated through the self-

evaluation teachers completed about their own marking and feedback. This exercise shows that most teachers are keen to improve their practice and recognise the improvements they can make to ensure all pupils make good progress. Where teachers were less reflective or less accurate in their self-assessment, you rightly challenged this with pertinent questions and comments that make clear your view of their effectiveness. This is sensible as it shows teachers what the expectations are and makes clear that there is no alternative but to improve their practice. I am pleased that teachers are getting opportunities to observe teaching at high performing schools and that this is helping teachers reflect on their own practice. Teachers have been very positive about these experiences and you have been able to point out where improvements are beginning as a result of these opportunities.

I was impressed with much of the teaching we saw this morning. Pupils were effectively learning the sounds that letters make and enjoyed making words using sounds. Some mathematics problems really made pupils think by expecting them to complete several steps to find the right answer. Where this was best done, the teacher asked pupils to explain the rationale for their decisions and, through this approach, constantly sought to increase pupils' mathematical understanding further. In less effective mathematics lessons we both noted that teachers often gave bigger numbers to higher attaining pupils. These bigger numbers did not make the problems harder to solve and, in some cases, they were easier to calculate because they fitted an easy-to-recognise pattern. I was impressed with your ability to talk about what we saw. You know where the strongest teaching is and where teaching requires improvement.

Your English and mathematics leaders are new to their posts this year. I am pleased that you have arranged for an expert mathematician to lead some of the training with teachers and TA's. The mathematics lead is clear about the priorities for developing maths. He knows exactly what is in the plan and can give a clear rationale for the actions being taken. It will be useful to support your English lead in developing her understanding of what needs to happen. While she is able to talk in general terms about the areas for improvement, her analysis was less securely based on evidence from children's work and progress. I know that you are an English specialist and plan to work together in developing writing. This is a sensible idea.

Your governors are very committed and I was heartened to hear them talk passionately about the need to get this right for the children you serve. They know what the school needs to do to improve and talked with clarity about how they see the school developing in the future. The last inspection report stated that you should seek an external review of governance. Governors have made enquiries about this but are yet to arrange it formally. Instead, they are working alongside the governing body from the NLE's school, learning from the practice of a more established governing body. They have taken the audit tool from the national college and are using this to evaluate their own effectiveness, using the partner school as a measure of success. Governors bring a range of professional experiences and they are

starting to use these to support school improvement. They are producing guidance to support governors in fulfilling their role in monitoring the work of the school. Early trials of this methodology have been successful.

The school development plan states in unambiguous language what needs to be done to improve further. The plan shows what has been achieved so progress to date can be seen. It lacks clear milestones that show what improvements are expected over time and this makes it difficult for governors and leaders to judge the appropriateness and pace of change.

The local authority monitors the quality of teaching in school. They provide termly reports which leave the school in no doubt about what they need to improve. Additional funding has been provided to support pupils in catching up in writing. The school has taken part in the Oxfordshire reading campaign and this has had a positive impact on improving standards in reading.

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, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- sharpen the action plan so it shows the intended impact of actions at appropriate intervals, over the next 18 months
- support the development of English leadership.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan
Her Majesty's Inspector