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4 June 2013

Mrs Carleen Dryburgh
Headteacher
Mullion Community Primary School
Willis Vean
Helston
TR12 7DF

Dear Mrs Dryburgh

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mullion County Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 June 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also spoke with a representative of the local authority over the telephone. I evaluated the school's post Ofsted action plans, together with other documentation including the monitoring of teaching, your most recent analysis of pupils' achievement and teachers' planning. We also visited each class and looked at a sample of pupils' books.

Context

The subject leader for English is currently on maternity leave. Two new experienced governors have joined the governing body. Two parent governors have left the governing body and replacements are currently being sought.

Main findings

The headteacher and her team are working very hard and effectively to drive improvement in the school. Teachers are determined to make these improvements and have wasted no time in implementing them. The action plans set out clearly what needs to be done and are regularly reviewed so that school leaders and governors can check if the actions are making a difference. They are the right actions and focus on ensuring that pupils are challenged to make good progress as a result of high quality teaching. Not all of the success criteria state clearly enough what effect improvements are expected to have on pupils' attainment and progress.

The headteacher has made the elements of good teaching clear to all staff and is working alongside teachers to develop challenging activities in mathematics for all pupils. In the lessons visited, pupils engaged well in imaginative and/or problem solving activities and could demonstrate how they are developing and applying their mathematical skills across the curriculum. Good use has been made of external training to help teachers to develop questioning techniques so that any misconception and/or gaps in pupils' understanding can be addressed quickly. Marking is improving but is still not consistently good in mathematics. Books show that not all teachers follow up marking by insisting that pupils improve a specific aspect of their work, for example by re-doing a problem they found difficult or by stretching and challenging pupils to apply what they have learned to a more complex question.

It is evident from the schools' own monitoring records that teaching is improving and there is a culture of shared ambition and openness in which teachers are keen to work together to improve their practice. Good arrangements are in place to build upon this work by linking with teachers in two neighbouring outstanding schools. Nevertheless, school leaders recognise that some teaching still requires improvement in order to be good. An external consultant is effectively supporting school leaders to develop their role in evaluating the impact of teaching on the progress of different groups of pupils. The school's current data show that improvements to teaching are accelerating pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. All pupils, including the more-able, in the current Year 5 and 6 are making good gains to catch up on past underachievement in lower Key Stage 2. However, leaders and managers know that much remains to be done to address historic weaknesses in writing for these pupils. While the progress of pupils in Years 3 and 4 is adequate, too many pupils are not yet making the rapid progress which they are capable of.

The governing body is finalising the external review of governance which was identified in the last inspection report. In the meantime, governor committees have been re-structured to share responsibility and accountability among the governor team. This has increased their confidence in holding school leaders to account. Nevertheless, governors have yet to securely establish their important role in

routinely challenging the school for tangible evidence of the impact of actions taken and the difference it has made to pupils.

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:

- ensure that all actions taken to improve the school are measured against clearly defined success criteria linked closely to pupils' attainment and progress
- ensure staff are familiar with the findings of the Ofsted reports, *Mathematics: made to measure* and *Good practice in primary mathematics: evidence from 20 successful schools* and how they can be used to support the school's work in developing teaching and raising standards
- secure greater consistency in marking, particularly in numeracy, and ensure that pupils are required more consistently to immediately address the areas for improvement identified by the teacher
- use the outcomes of the forthcoming external review of governance to improve the work of the governing body, where appropriate, in evaluating the performance of the school and holding school leaders to account.

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

The local authority has brokered an external review of governance which is due to take place shortly. The school is part of a local co-operative trust and is making good use of the expertise of other school leaders within it to improve the quality of teaching. In the classrooms visited there was clear evidence of the impact of work to develop teachers' questioning and to strengthen and highlight the use of mathematics across the curriculum. Arrangements have been made for the school to work with two other local schools, both of which are rated as outstanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson
Her Majesty's Inspector