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Mr Tim Palmer
Headteacher
St Osyth Church of England Primary School
Norman Close
St Osyth
Clacton-on-Sea
CO16 8PN

Dear Mr Palmer

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Osyth Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 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 on 6 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings to discuss the action taken since the last inspection were held with you and other senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan and the school's lesson observation records were evaluated. Brief visits were made to several classrooms to see pupils at work. The school provided its latest assessment summaries for each year group.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a teacher has returned from maternity leave, reducing the need for agency staff. Three teachers are leaving at the end of the summer term and two new teachers have been appointed to begin in September. The vacancy will be covered by redeploying existing staff until a permanent appointment is made.

Main findings

The latest data shows that standards are below average in all year groups and that pupils' progress in writing still requires considerable improvement throughout Key Stage 2. Pupils in Year 6 are on course for better results than those achieved in 2012. Their progress over the last two years is good, but this has only partly made up for their underachievement in previous years. Year 5 pupils have made slow progress over the last three years in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has taken action on a number of fronts to raise achievement and improve teaching. Termly meetings are held in which senior leaders discuss with each class teacher the progress of the pupils that they teach. These identify pupils who need additional support or challenge over the next few weeks. The information is also analysed to evaluate the progress of each year-group in reading, writing and mathematics, and to check the performance of different groups of pupils, such as those eligible for free school meals. This is beginning to raise achievement.

Pupils are being taught techniques to structure their writing better in paragraphs and to use a wider range of descriptive language. Writing lessons have been structured to include a session focusing on a specific skill, followed by an immediate opportunity to apply the skill. This approach has recently been adapted for mathematics and is leading to more effective learning.

Teachers' work is monitored through regular lesson observations and checks on pupils' work. Senior leaders provide useful feedback to teachers, some of it quite detailed in relation to the lesson seen. However, the lesson observations do not routinely include a clear judgement on the progress made by pupils during the lesson and over recent lessons, or on the progress of particular groups of pupils, such as those entitled to free school meals.

Senior leaders have created opportunities for teachers to work together to ensure a sensible progression of ideas and skills in different strands of mathematics, such as shape, measure or data handling. Very recently, teachers have worked together to review the whole curriculum, introducing themes that ensure coherence for pupils as they move through the school. It is too early for the impact of this and some of the other changes to be demonstrated.

The governing body is about to undergo a review by the local authority. Governors monitor the school's work through regular visits and are well informed about pupils' progress in the present year. However, the data they receive does not show where year-groups need to make up for earlier underachievement. Governors do not make enough use of Raise Online reports to analyse previous years' performance.

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

- use recent pupil progress data to demonstrate the impact of the various improvement strategies on pupils' progress
- use longer-term pupil progress data to check that pupils are catching up any earlier underachievement
- speed up pupils' progress in writing throughout Key Stage 2
- speed up Year 5 pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- set specific targets for each year-group specifying the attainment levels expected by the end of each Key Stage for progress to be considered good, breaking these targets down into milestones for each term
- ensure that lesson observations include a clear judgement on the progress made by pupils during the lesson and in recent lessons, and on the progress of particular groups of pupils within the class
- ensure that governors have access to the school's Raise Online report and receive training in its interpretation.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. The school has agreed to provide regular updates on pupils' progress.

External support

The local authority has issued the school with a warning notice and has removed the governing body's delegated powers to control the budget and to undertake the headteachers performance review. A Strategic Management Board has been set up to review the school's progress. This involves representatives of the local authority, diocese, governing body and senior leadership team. A local authority review undertaken since the inspection provides evidence of improvements in teaching.

The school's membership of a local partnership is a good source of professional development for teachers. The school has worked with others to moderate its assessments, which are considered accurate. Links have been established with the leaders of two outstanding schools, who have provided guidance and support for members of the leadership team.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Essex and the Diocesan Director of Education for Chelmsford.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott
Her Majesty's Inspector