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5 July 2013

Mrs A. Hanney
Headteacher
Christ Church CofE Primary School
Woodland Vale Road
St. Leonards-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN37 6JJ

Dear Mrs Hanney

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Christ Church CofE Primary School

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

Evidence

During the visit, I had meetings with you and other senior leaders, with the Chair and Vice-Chair of your Governing Body and with a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plans and reviewed current information about pupils' progress. Accompanied by you and your deputy headteacher, I visited all classes to see the school at work, and I met a group of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection, a subject leader for English has been appointed for September. A new system for tracking progress has been introduced into the Early Years Foundation Stage and a teaching assistant with specialist training is providing small group and individual support for Reception children with poorly developed language and communication skills. A Year 6 teacher has left to work in a

special school and responsibility for the class has been taken up by a teacher returning after a period of absence.

Main findings

The school's action plan gives a useful overview of the challenges presented by recommendations made at the last inspection. It then sets out a programme of actions that are sufficiently detailed and precise to ensure that everyone involved knows what is expected. Target dates for the completion of each action are mapped out in a separate document, which also identifies who is to lead each initiative. Links between commentary in the action plan and information given in the second document are not easily followed by anyone not working with them daily. This arrangement makes it harder for governors and local authority advisors to track the school's progress in meeting its targets. While it is apparent that you and other senior leaders share responsibility for monitoring the implementation of actions to be taken, it is not always clear who is to evaluate the impact of what has been done. The plan says little about the specific responsibilities of middle leaders or about further professional development to help them play a key role in the school's improvement.

The evident success of steps taken recently to raise standards and improve pupils' progress in mathematics demonstrates how effectively the school can respond to priorities for improvement. You, your governors and your senior leaders are showing a comparable sense of urgency and readiness to benefit from advice and support in tackling weaknesses in literacy and English. Careful analysis of information about the standards and progress of different groups has highlighted gaps in achievement which you are responding to in practical and well-directed ways: for example, through targeted support for particular pupils, and the use of consultants and specially trained teaching assistants to strengthen teaching and learning of phonics in the Reception class.

In summary, you, your 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:

- links between the action plan itself and the separate chart setting out the timetable for each step are made clear, so that it is easier to track progress on each key issue
- roles and responsibilities at each level of leadership and management are clearly defined and rigorous systems for monitoring their effectiveness established
- phase and subject leaders have the training and support they need to meet the targets set out in the action plan.

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 provided constructive support through its 'Securing good' programme and advised you and your senior leaders about setting clearly defined targets. The local authority has also moderated English assessments in Key Stages 1 and 2, helping to ensure that pupils' progress is accurately tracked and that appropriate action is taken to close gaps in achievement. The diocese is less proactive but steadily supportive.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex and the Diocese of Chichester.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham
Her Majesty's Inspector