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15 July 2013

Ms Kate Love
Headteacher
Folkestone, St Martin's Church of England Primary School
Horn Street
Folkestone
CT20 3JJ

Dear Ms Love

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Folkestone, St Martin's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 met with you and the deputy headteacher, the Chair and one other member of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plan and considered a range of documentation. This included information relating to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, data relating to pupils' attainment and progress as well as minutes of recent governing body meetings. You took me on a tour of the school and we made brief visits to all classes.

Main findings

School leaders, governors and staff have accepted the findings from the recent inspection. They understand the need to ensure that most pupils make good progress in every lesson in order that pupils achieve well over time. You, your deputy and governors have a strong sense of purpose and all staff are committed to making this school a good school.

Following the inspection, an action plan was promptly compiled in order to address the areas identified for improvement. Many actions required for improvement are already underway. These include opportunities for teachers to attend the local authority run 'Outstanding Teacher Programme', as well as focused training sessions in school, for example on marking pupils' work. A 'lesson study' project and the appointment of a local secondary mathematics teacher are just two of the planned initiatives commencing at the start of the new academic year. The written plan provides a clear steer for improvement, although the details about who is monitoring or evaluating, and when and how this is to be done lack clarity. Success criteria do not always link sharply to improving outcomes for pupils.

We looked at the tracking of pupils' progress throughout the school. Senior leaders, governors and teaching staff have a very precise view of the rates of progress of individual pupils and classes. Progress is analysed in detail and comparisons drawn between subjects and identifiable groups of pupils. The progress made by almost all pupils this academic year appears to have improved. Pupils who are behind with their work are supported by a number of targeted interventions including mentoring as well as additional learning support. Early indications are that test results for pupils currently in Year 6 are less good than predicted, particularly relating to progress in reading. The school is already identifying reasons for this in order to ensure this pattern is not repeated. Floor targets, however, have been met. By contrast, moderated end of Key Stage 1 assessments demonstrate a significant rise in attainment. Pupils currently in Year 5 have made good progress this year. However, they are carrying a legacy of underachievement from weaker teaching and repeated changes of teacher in past years. These pupils need to make rapid progress throughout their time in Year 6 if they are to meet the levels expected for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2. This situation was discussed at length with you, with governors and with the local authority.

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

- review the progress made by the oldest pupils in school even more frequently to ensure their work consistently challenges them in order that they make maximum progress

- ensure that the oldest pupils in school are provided with additional targeted opportunities to make up for previous lost ground, including through small group and individual tuition where necessary
- ensure points for improvement identified when monitoring the quality of teaching are always followed through in the subsequent observation and are supported by professional development opportunities
- maintain a tight focus on evaluating learning in lessons and the impact on pupils progress over time
- sharpen the action plan so that: success criteria are clearly related to impact upon pupils' outcomes, there are clear time-frames and clarity of accountability for monitoring and evaluation.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. We agreed that I will return in the autumn term to meet you, governors and the local authority to check on the progress being made by the school in addressing the key recommendations from the last inspection, and most vitally to review the progress being made by pupils in Year 6.

External support

The local authority knows the school well, provides regular advice and guidance and is determined to facilitate the necessary improvements. Support has increased since the inspection of April 2013 and school progress is currently being monitored every six weeks. The local authority plays a vital role in brokering highly relevant support. A good level of collaborative working exists between schools within the local 'hub' and teachers frequently attend courses offered through the Shepway Teaching Schools alliance. The range of external support is contributing to raising the quality of teaching and strengthening leadership.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Kent and to the Diocese of Canterbury.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald
Her Majesty's Inspector