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16 July 2013

Mrs Teresa Homan
Headteacher
Bapchild and Tonge Church of England Primary School
School Lane
Sittingbourne
ME9 9NL

Dear Mrs Homan

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bapchild and Tonge Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan, known as the 'Raising Attainment Plan', was evaluated. A range of documentation including governing body minutes, current data about pupils' progress and records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching was also reviewed. You took me on a tour of the school and we made brief visits to the Key Stage 2 classes.

Context

Since the inspection of May 2013, the deputy headteacher has resigned. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and will join the school in November 2013.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors have responded quickly to the recommendations from the section 5 inspection. They are wholly committed to raising teachers' expectations and understanding of what constitutes 'good' and 'outstanding' teaching. Senior leaders and governors hold a precise view of pupils' achievements as well as of the school's progress towards addressing its priorities. An appropriate sense of ambition and urgency exist and staff morale is strong.

The Raising Attainment Plan, written straight after the recent inspection, is clearly targeted on the areas for improvement. It also includes a number of elements arising from school self-evaluation that were not highlighted within the inspection report. The plan is succinct and focuses on increasing pupils' achievement through further raising the quality of teaching and strengthening leadership and its impact on teaching and pupils' progress. Roles and responsibilities, resources and intended outcomes are typically identified. Time-frames are well-defined and ambitious. The roles of the governing body and senior leaders in monitoring and evaluating progress are clear. A number of actions have already been introduced.

Checks of the quality of teaching, planning, pupils' workbooks and progress data by senior leaders are extensive and systematic. Feedback is provided to individual teachers, with strengths and the required improvements identified. However, there is not always a clear enough evaluation of the progress that pupils are making in their lessons. A range of initiatives including visits to other schools, attendance at courses and particularly the 'lesson study' approach have been planned to ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve. Most recent monitoring indicates increasingly purposeful marking that enables pupils to learn effectively from mistakes and extend their thinking further. Staff meetings are used effectively and examples of good practice are highlighted and discussed. As a result teachers are gaining a clearer view of the constituent parts of good and better practice and teaching is improving further.

Teachers have better understanding of their own responsibilities for raising pupils' achievement. Regular pupil progress meetings ensure all teachers know exactly the targets they are working towards. In these meetings, pupils' learning needs are correctly identified and planned for. As a result, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 has risen significantly this year. Furthermore, pupils in Year 6 appear to have made particularly strong progress in reading and mathematics. Processes for the performance management of staff, including the headteacher, are rigorous because accountability and expectations are more explicit. Targets for staff are rightly linked to improving achievement of pupils in their class.

The governing body provides high quality support and plays an identifiable role in driving improvement. A recent review of governors' roles and responsibilities has ensured that further training needs are identified. Although committee systems are currently being restructured, the 'Executive Committee' is already highly effective

and holds school leaders appropriately to account. Governors receive comprehensive, accurate information from the headteacher and take a strategic role in reviewing and evaluating progress. Additionally, governors play a vital role in ensuring parents' views are sought and keeping them informed of school progress.

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, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- ensure that when monitoring the quality of teaching, senior leaders focus on the progress being made by individual pupils and groups of pupils
- ensure that the headteacher's report to the governing body and the subsequent governing body minutes adequately prioritise information regarding pupils' achievements and progress against the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

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 is providing a good range of effective support to the school and this has been important in securing the breadth of improvements to date. Support is helping to improve the quality of teaching and strengthen leadership through a range of training. Coaching and mentoring activities for subject and senior leaders and governors have also been arranged. The local authority holds regular progress meetings and these challenge school leaders to improve the quality of education and to check that actions being taken are having the desired effect. Progress meetings and current levels of support will continue until evidence indicates they are no longer necessary.

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

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald
Her Majesty's Inspector