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12 September 2013

Mrs F Crook
Headteacher
Kirtlington Church of England Primary School
Heyford Road
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OX5 3HL

Dear Mrs Crook

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

Following my visit to your school on 12 September 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.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- improve the school action plans to include effective milestones linked to the expected gains in pupils' progress across the school, ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and ways of measuring the success of the plan are set out against each action
- make sure you and your subject leaders evaluate the quality of pupils' learning first and foremost, including the quality of learning of different groups, when you monitor lessons and judge the quality of teaching.
- use a wider range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching which should include lesson observations, checking on the quality of pupils'

work over time, discussions with pupils as well as using the information you hold on pupils' attainment and progress

- make effective use of staff appraisal to increase the accountability of all staff
- find effective mechanisms to consult parents, improve communication and allay concerns that have been raised.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Chair of Governors and another member of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a local leader of education to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. We walked around all classrooms and met staff and pupils during lessons. I also looked at pupils' work in books across a range of subjects. The school action plans were evaluated and I also considered pupils' progress data for the last academic year.

Context

Since the inspection two teaching assistants have left and two teaching assistants have been appointed.

Main findings

The judgements made at the last inspection, although disappointing, were not a shock to staff and governors. The relatively new governing body recognised the need to rapidly improve and the advice given following the review of governance has been used well to consider and implement new ways of monitoring the work of the school. Governors are developing their understanding of pupils' performance data and are now providing greater challenge through questioning and actively taking part in checking on the way in which you and your subject leaders are working improve the school. In addition, the governing body has reviewed its roles and responsibilities, and governors now have a good understanding of their role in focusing on the strategic development of the school in order to be judged at least good at the next inspection. I was pleased to hear them talk passionately about the need to improve the school in order to serve your pupils and the local community well. They are eager to work alongside the governing body of a local outstanding school to gain further insight into becoming a strong and effective governing body.

The school's information on pupils' attainment and progress at the end of the last academic year indicates improvement, although you and your governors recognise that the results in writing for all year groups across the school are weaker.

You are working alongside a local leader of education to improve your action plans, but these need further work to sharpen them in order for them to be an effective

tool to drive improvement. The experienced subject leaders for mathematics and English from the local leader of education's school are beginning to work with your subject leaders to increase their skills in checking on the progress of groups of pupils in lessons and improving the quality of marking and feedback provided to pupils, particularly in mathematics and writing across the curriculum. This is at an early stage of development and more needs to be done to consistently provide good quality feedback to pupils.

At present the organisational effectiveness of the school is weak. Although monitoring activities take place and pupils' progress is checked, these activities are not carried out systematically. There is an urgent need to increase the accountability of a largely experienced and stable staff team. Staff appraisal is not used effectively to hold teachers to account for the learning and progress of all groups of pupils, or to ensure their plans are sufficiently challenging, including the guidance they provide for pupils enable them to understand how to improve their work.

It was disappointing to see the results of the online Parent View survey. Parents have continued to use this tool to convey their views until mid-July 2013. Answers to all the questions showed some negative responses and just under one third of parents would not recommend the school to other parents. This is clearly a concern. Actions to increase parents' confidence in the school have not been swift enough. You now need to find ways to consult parents in order to increase their support and address their concerns.

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 a wide range of support, including facilitating the link with the local leader of education, and an Achievement for All coach. The diocese is also providing additional support. However, at present you are not acting swiftly enough on the advice that has been provided to address the areas for improvement from the inspection report. As a result, the impact of this support at present is limited.

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

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson
Her Majesty's Inspector