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Mr Martin Harding
Executive Headteacher
Marldon Church of England Primary School
Marldon Cross Hill
Paignton
TQ3 1PD

Dear Mr Harding

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

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 and the headteacher 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- strengthen the accountability procedures at all levels to ensure an increasing and consistent focus on the improvement in teaching and pupils' progress
- ensure that the recent changes in school leadership focus strongly on improving teaching, using resources from the schools within the management partnership as appropriate
- ensure staff and governors are familiar with the findings of the Ofsted survey reports *Getting to good – How headteachers achieve success* and *School governance – Learning from the best* and how they can be used to support the school's work in improving teaching and raising standards.

Evidence

During the visit meetings were held with you as executive headteacher for the federation and the headteacher, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement action plan was evaluated. Together with this, the school's system for tracking the progress made by pupils was reviewed as well as the system for monitoring and supporting the work of teachers. The current consultation with parents on the school joining a federation was discussed.

Context

Shortly before the last section 5 inspection the school entered into a management partnership with the United Schools' Federation. Since then the school has strengthened its work with the federation's schools. The executive headteacher for the federation has responsibility for the strategic leadership of the school and there have been a number of initiatives to support the work of teachers using staff from the other linked schools. The school's substantive deputy headteacher has been seconded to another school in the federation. An assistant headteacher, from within the federation, has been appointed on a year-long secondment to Marlton. In September there was one new teaching appointment to the school. At the time of the monitoring inspection a consultation with parents was underway to seek views on the proposal for Marlton to join the United Schools' Federation as a full member.

Main findings

The school's action plan is linked effectively to the local authority's targeted intervention and support programme. It is fit for purpose and addresses appropriately the key issues from the last inspection. There are clear success criteria, based on the impact of support work to raise standards, appropriate costings and named staff who are responsible for the completion of tasks.

The work to improve teaching has been enhanced by the school's involvement in the management partnership with the federation's schools. The resources available from the federation have enabled the school to develop and refine procedures to monitor teachers and to provide support and challenge. There is now a clear system in place whereby teachers meet with senior leaders regularly to review the progress of pupils and plan appropriate actions when underachievement is identified. Furthermore, plans are in place to develop the teacher team leader role to ensure good practice is shared, but this is currently at an early stage. Taken overall, although promising, these developments have not yet led to a sustained and consistent improvement in the standards achieved by all pupils.

The system for tracking pupils' progress has been developed to provide greater information on both individuals and groups. Senior leaders use this information well to hold teachers to account, for example in ensuring more precise lesson planning to meet the full range of pupils' abilities. Pupils are also now more involved in setting their own targets in writing and mathematics although this has only just been introduced. Work on some improvements in progress tracking and specific targeted support for pupils had started before the last inspection and as a result of this, the outcomes for the Year 6 pupils this year were significantly better than in 2012, including in mathematics. These systems for tracking and supporting pupils are still being refined and need to build on the improvements in achievement made over the last year.

There is a clearer focus by leaders across the school on the improvement of teaching and raising standards. This has been driven by the executive headteacher and facilitated by staffing resources from within the federation. Governors have an accurate understanding about the developments of the monitoring and accountability systems and are keen to promote improvements and challenge school leaders. However, at this time, monitoring systems have yet to be fully established and lead to consistent and sustained improvement in the outcomes for pupils.

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 school draws effectively on support and challenge from the local authority. This has included the work of the school improvement officer who has provided support for the leadership of the school and helped to broker the management partnership with the federation. The local authority undertakes regular reviews of teaching and the progress made by pupils and this is valued by senior leaders at the school as an external evaluation of the impact of the improvements undertaken.

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

Yours sincerely

Robert Pyner
Her Majesty's Inspector