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7th October 2013

Tamsin Little
Headteacher
Thorndon Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
The Street
Thorndon
IP23 7JR

Dear Ms Little

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Thorndon Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 on 4 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:

- Sharpen action planning, with a stronger focus on learning underpinning the objectives.
- Ensure that pupils in the Reception and Key Stage 1 class are suitably challenged through the activities that are planned for them.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. You accompanied me on a tour of the school. I visited all of the classrooms and spoke to pupils about their work. I also looked at a sample of pupils' books. The school action plan was evaluated.

Context

One new teacher has joined the school since the last inspection.

Main findings

You are making significant and positive changes to the quality of teaching in the school. You are ambitious for the school, and are committed to better achievement for all pupils. Your action plan contains straightforward outlines of what the school needs to do to succeed. Staff share your vision for the school and you are going forward as a cohesive team. The plan needs to be even clearer about exactly what success will look like, and how you and other leaders will measure it.

Since the inspection, a new approach to marking has been introduced that is being used consistently across the school. Pupils are receiving feedback about their work. This is most successful in mathematics, where pupils are given very clear guidance as to how to improve their learning, and are being asked to respond to the marking. The marking of English work is regular but the comments that some teachers are giving are not always as helpful in guiding pupils towards improving their work. Your evaluation of teaching has also led to pupils' work being more closely matched to their abilities.

The learning environment for pupils in the Reception and Key Stage 1 class is developing well inside and outdoors. Opportunities for practical learning involving enquiry and exploration are plentiful. You are making creative use of the available space and have some exciting ideas to develop it further. It is important that the revised approach that you have put in place here is closely monitored so that all activities provide high quality learning opportunities for pupils of all abilities especially the most able.

Governors have responded swiftly to the findings of the inspection. They are meeting more frequently, and have set up working parties to monitor progress in key areas. The governing body is not accepting information at face value. Governors are closely involved in monitoring activities so that they are in a position to form an independent view of the school's work. The governing body know that they need to challenge as well as support, and are becoming more confident about asking the 'right' questions.

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 provides a range of support for the head teacher and teachers, and this is set to continue. It is valued by the head teacher and governing body, who have welcomed the opportunity to work alongside colleagues from other schools to check that their own evaluations are accurate. The local authority also checks the school's progress against their action plan.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk and the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector