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Mr D Knight
Headteacher
Tatworth Primary School
School Lane
Tatworth
Chard
TA20 2RX

Dear Mr Knight

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tatworth Primary School

Following my visit to your academy on 25 September, 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy 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 academy should take further action to:

- implement the new leadership structure swiftly and agree clear objectives with members of the senior leadership team to improve their performance
- ensure that pupils understand clearly how to improve their work
- use the findings and training materials of Ofsted survey reports *Moving English forward* and *Mathematics: made to measure* to increase the proportion of teaching that is good and outstanding
- ensure that the success criteria in the academy's action plan include interim objectives and measures to evaluate the improvement in pupils' achievement.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A group of pupils talked with me about their recent experiences of the academy. I held telephone discussions with the school improvement partner and a representative of the local authority. The academy's action plan was evaluated and I looked at the policy for marking, data on pupils' achievement and records of meetings of the governing body. We visited each classroom briefly together and examined pupils' written work.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection, one teacher has left the academy and two teachers have joined, one on a fixed-term contract. Recently, the leader responsible for Key Stage 2 and English has relinquished her responsibilities. The governing body have begun to review the academy's leadership structure before reallocating these duties. The academy's school improvement partner changed at the beginning of the academic year.

Main findings

You and the governing body have responded positively to the last inspection and are keen to tackle the key issues. Promptly, you have met with teachers to outline your higher expectations for teaching and pupils' achievement. This has resulted in a number of improvements. For example, pupils have a clearer understanding of the next steps to take to raise their attainment because teachers set clear learning targets in English and mathematics. Lessons now give greater consideration to the learning objective and how tasks will be set at the right level as a result of adopting a more consistent approach to planning lessons. However, brief visits to lessons and discussion with pupils confirm that too many pupils do not know how to improve their work, particularly in mathematics. This is because changes to the marking policy have not been implemented rigorously enough.

Members of the senior leadership team have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities following a visit to a local primary school. This has led to more opportunities for leaders to work together to implement the academy's action plan. Subject leaders are beginning to check more closely the difference that actions are making, but the findings are not always followed up promptly enough. The appointed governors have agreed objectives with you to improve your performance. However, you have not yet agreed objectives with subject and phase leaders. Consequently, the systems to hold leaders to account are not being utilised fully. Subject leaders should ensure that all staff are familiar with the findings of Ofsted's subject survey reports and use them to improve the teaching of English and mathematics.

The headteacher has involved staff and governors in drafting a detailed plan of actions to tackle the most important weaknesses. There are rigorous arrangements in place to gauge the academy's progress. The governing body is kept informed by regular reports from the headteacher. However, the academy's action plan lacks interim objectives and does not set out the required improvement in pupils' achievement clearly enough.

The governing body welcomes the greater challenge provided by the new school improvement partner. It recognises that in the past it has not had accurate enough information on the academy's effectiveness. Governors now have a better understanding of the issues as a result of observing staff training and attending presentations to parents about the curriculum. The records of meetings confirm that the governing body is beginning to hold staff to account such as requesting further information when pupils' rates of progress give cause for concern. The governing body's higher expectations have been shared with staff so that they know how good performance will be rewarded.

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

Despite being a stand-alone convertor academy, you have rightly informed the local authority of the action being taken to tackle the areas requiring improvement. The academy is beginning to draw effectively on external support. For example, additional scrutiny from the school improvement partner has given the governing body a more accurate view of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body continues to access training and advice from the local authority through its governor services. Teachers will shortly work with lead practitioners from a local secondary academy, recently judged outstanding, to improve the pace and challenge of learning in lessons. The academy should pursue similar links with an effective primary school to access support specific to the primary phase.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Somerset and the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector