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18 October 2013

Trudie Harkin
Headteacher
Cockfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Cockfield
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP30 0LA

Dear Mrs Harkin

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

Following my visit to your school on 17 October 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 July 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

You and the 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:

- Extend the action plan so that staff and governors know how the school will improve and develop over time.
- Improve provision for outdoor learning particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Include teaching assistants and other staff in the performance management process.
- Make full use of Ofsted's resources and publications as examples of good practice.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, six governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's

action plan was evaluated. I checked the school's latest information about pupils' learning and records showing how you have been monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. You took me on a tour of the school visiting all classes briefly.

Context

You were appointed on a permanent contract from September 2013 to replace the acting headteacher who led the school previously. One teacher left the school at the end of the summer term. A part-time teacher now working full time is the replacement. Two new governors have joined the governing body. Following the county's change in the age of transfer the school has Year 5 pupils for the first time. During the summer, building work was completed providing one new classroom to accommodate growth in pupil numbers.

Main findings

You have rapidly identified what needs to be done to get the school to good and beyond. Your and the governing body's determination and ambition to move the school forward quickly came across strongly during our discussions. The progress targets you have set for all pupils are rightly challenging. A short plan outlines your strategy for improvement for the start of this school year. The actions are sensible and are closely aligned to the improvement points the school was given at the last inspection. Deadlines, however, are too flexible. These should be pinned down so that those responsible for ensuring that they happen can be held to account. It will be important at the earliest opportunity to extend the action plan to cover at least the next four terms. Staff and governors should be absolutely clear about how the school is expected to develop and improve over time.

Staff have taken on board the agreed minimum expectations for teaching. Already this has led to changes for the better such as pupils knowing their targets and how to achieve them. You have ensured that teachers have an accurate picture of every pupil's learning as a starting point for planning their work and measuring their progress. The new software for collecting data is proving useful as a tool to analyse how well pupils' are learning. Classrooms are mostly inviting spaces for learning but outdoor areas are less well developed. You are managing teachers' performance well but you have not yet extended this to include teaching assistants and other staff.

Governors are monitoring the school's progress systematically towards its agreed development targets. They are well informed and knowledgeable, making visits to the school regularly and interrogating data. The governing body demonstrates that it is able to take and support decisions in the interests of pupils. You recognise the value of the governors' different perspective which strengthens your leadership.

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 school. The Human Resources team has been particularly helpful in guiding you through complex personnel issues. Governors have accessed a wide range of training provided by the local authority. Advisers for English, mathematics and early years are working with the school to improve learning and teaching. The school improvement adviser provides an external view of the school's effectiveness. You are developing useful links with other schools locally. Networking with them provides access to examples of good practice but you may also find it useful to make better use of Ofsted's good practice publications available on the website.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector