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Mr R Townshend
Headteacher
Sir Henry Fermor Church of England Primary School
Crowborough Hill
Crowborough
East Sussex
TN6 2SD

Dear Mr Townshend

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sir Henry Fermor Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 21 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.

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:

- check assessment information from the last academic year to ensure that it is an accurate reflection of pupils' achievement
- ensure that short-term targets for pupils' progress are included in the school development plan
- set up links with a 'good' or 'outstanding' governing body at another school.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with four members of the governing body and spoke to a representative of the local authority by phone. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Context

A new headteacher has started work at the school this term. He has made changes to leadership roles and responsibilities. For example, there is a new phase leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The lower school phase leader now has responsibility for Years 1, 2, and 3 and the upper school phase leader has responsibility for Years 4, 5 and 6.

Main findings

Staff have welcomed the new headteacher's clear thinking and direction. He has settled quickly and has already begun to make improvements to systems and policies and this is changing the way that teachers work and pupils learn.

The headteacher has a clear strategy to improve teaching. Central to his vision for 'good' and 'outstanding' teaching across the school is the '360°' overview of provision. Each teacher now has a folder that summarises important information about their class and some key documentation such as the school's summary of self-evaluation and the school improvement plan. The folders also contain records of pupils' progress and details of all the checks made on the quality of teaching. So far, the headteacher has visited every class to observe lessons and has checked teachers' planning. This has given him a good understanding of the overall quality of teaching in the school. He has given teachers clear feedback on what they need to do to improve and this is recorded in the folder. Senior leaders will now work alongside teachers to model good practice and help staff to develop their skills.

Key members of the governing body are very knowledgeable about the school's work, but they are still keen to improve the overall effectiveness of the governing body as a whole. Governors would benefit from a link with an 'outstanding' governing body at another school. The new headteacher has undertaken to produce full reports on pupils' progress for the governing body. However, without clear short-term targets in the school improvement plan, it will be difficult for the governing body to judge how well the school is doing at key points during the year. In addition, some governors acknowledge that they do not fully understand the annual published performance data reports such as RAISEonline.

HMI will attend a meeting of the teaching and learning committee of the governing body in January and 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 is making good use of support from the local authority. The adviser allocated to the school has already given valuable guidance to the headteacher on writing an effective action plan. School leaders are also taking advantage of the training opportunities on offer to staff, such as the 'Every Lesson Counts' programme. The governing body has booked bespoke training to develop skills in the analysis of school performance data. School leaders are beginning to set up links with other schools, but this work is at an early stage.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Chichester.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Knowles

Her Majesty's Inspector