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11 November 2013

Mrs Emma Wigmore
Headteacher
St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
London Road
Bowers Gifford
SS13 2DU

Dear Mrs Wigmore

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Margaret's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Bowers Gifford

Following my visit to your school on 8 November 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. 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:

- make sure that the improvement plan extends to the Spring term and identifies how you will measure for success against the action points
- monitor the progress of pupil premium pupils against their peers at every opportunity, including in pupil progress meetings, observations of teaching by senior leaders, and by teachers themselves in lessons
- continue to strengthen the capacity of the governing body.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meeting with you and other senior leaders, three teachers, a group of pupils, five members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated

the school improvement plan. We also visited every class briefly to assess the quality of teaching and learning.

Context

Since the previous inspection, you have taken the deputy headteacher off timetable so that she can concentrate on leading on the quality of teaching and learning. Classes in Key Stage 2 are now grouped according to ability for literacy and numeracy. You have appointed an attendance officer. The governing body now consists of twelve members instead of eighteen.

Main findings

Your termly school improvement plan is detailed and addresses the key areas which will drive improvement, but it is not always clear how success will be measured, particularly in relation to pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.

Teachers who showed me their teaching logs reported that they have become more reflective about how they teach, and the impact their teaching has on pupils' outcomes. You have created a more open dialogue about what good teaching looks like and how weaknesses can be tackled by allocating a professional partner to every teacher. While pupils' attainment remains low, their progress is improving steadily.

My visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' books show that more teachers are planning lessons which meet different pupils' capabilities. Marking is becoming more helpful in telling pupils how they can improve. I witnessed many opportunities for pupils to talk about what they were learning with their peers.

Governors acknowledge that they were not very effective in the past, but demonstrate a willingness to improve their practice. They have identified appropriate training to start to tackle any weaknesses. They have produced their own action plan, and their monitoring role features clearly in the school action plan. They are developing their understanding of the progress made by different groups of pupils in the school.

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 has provided an appropriate level of support and challenge to school leaders and teachers. Many teachers are attending courses to develop their own leadership or teaching practice. The local authority also commissions half-termly teaching and learning reviews which help focus senior leaders' attention on driving up standards.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk] – for academies