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26 November 2013

Ms Tamsin Hayward
Acting Headteacher
Wraxall CE VA Primary School
Bristol Road
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Dear Ms Hayward

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wraxall Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 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 September 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:

- strengthen the role of the governing body by devising monitoring guidelines so that they can check for themselves the improvements that are being made.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the headteacher designate, five governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated and the notes of visits from the local authority

representative were scrutinised. I also considered the new systems introduced to manage the performance of the teachers and accompanied you and the headteacher designate on a learning walk around the school and into all four classes.

Context

Since the inspection, there have been some unavoidable and unexpected staff absences, which are being covered by supply teachers. There have been changes to the governing body, which includes the appointments of a new Chair and a Vice Chair of the Governing Body. The headteacher designate has been making regular visits to the school in preparation for January 2014, when he takes up his post.

Main findings

It is clear that all those involved with the school are 'on board' for the journey of improvement, which is travelling at a very fast pace. The acting headteacher has swiftly started to address the areas that require improvement. Having taken guidance from the local authority, she has been the driving force behind the school improvement plan, which demonstrates rigour, detail and clear milestones from which progress can be accurately measured. Staff training needs have been clearly identified and sessions already completed have raised teacher expectations. For example, local authority subject specialists have modelled the use of penetrating questions to challenge pupils and these training events have been well received. By discussing the different ways that mathematical calculations can be taught, teachers now have a common understanding of how these concepts need to be introduced systematically throughout the school. Lesson observations carried out by the acting headteacher and headteacher designate indicate that teachers have a better understanding of the importance of engaging all pupils in their learning. As senior leaders, they have a shared understanding of the importance of linking what they see in lessons with both the work that pupils produce over time and the information gained from checking the progress they are making. The acting headteacher and headteacher designate are also supporting teachers in their use of the pupil tracking systems to plan work that meets the needs of all the pupils. A marking policy has been agreed and is established in all classes. The acting headteacher has prepared information folders for those staff who have been unavoidably absent from school for some time so that they can be brought up to speed quickly on their return.

The new governors who were appointed shortly after the inspection have brought with them expertise from outside of education and this is complimenting the work of the governing body. There is a clear desire amongst governors to 'get it right' and they have welcomed a review of their role. By creating a clear set of guidelines, establishing rigorous systems and undergoing considerable training, governors have a clearer understanding of their role. They feel more confident when asking questions and seek clarity in the plans and suggestions presented to them by the acting headteacher and headteacher designate. Governors have made themselves

known to parents and pupils through the website and publicise the improvements taking place through regular letters and updates.

External support

By supporting the acting headteacher to identify the steps that needed to be taken in 'bite –size' chunks, the local authority has ensured that the improvement plan is relevant and manageable. Key roles and responsibilities are clearly indicated week by week and the local authority reviews the impact of the improvements made every six weeks. Teaching staff are benefiting from an intensive bespoke programme of support from specialist teachers and advisors from the local authority. An experienced headteacher has been allocated to the school to work as a professional partner offering advice and guidance. Working alongside three other local primaries is providing the staff with additional support and extra resources for improvement. Governors have appreciated the training and support they have received from the local authority and know there is always someone there they can go to for advice. They are fully aware that the next step in their development is to devise ways in which they can check school improvements themselves. The headteacher designate's current school has been very supportive allowing time for visits to the school to ensure he is kept up-to-date with the progress being made.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for North Somerset and the local church diocese.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector