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24 January 2014

Mr Paul Wisken
Headteacher
Forches Cross Community Primary School
Forches Avenue
Barnstaple
EX32 8EF

Dear Mr Wisken,

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Forches Cross Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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 October 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 governing body and senior leaders should take further action to:

- Develop middle and subject leaders' expertise and hold them to account for leading, monitoring and evaluating school improvement initiatives.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the recent inspection. I also had an opportunity to address members of staff to explain my role in supporting the school. Documentation on the work of the school since the recent inspection and the school improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection in October 2013 one teacher has resigned and was replaced by a new class teacher at the beginning of January 2014. The deputy headteacher has increased his teaching commitment to full time.

Main findings

You have wasted no time in starting to address the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. Your quick and decisive actions to tackle weaknesses identified in teaching are already leading to improvements in the quality of teaching provision and the progress pupils are making, especially in Key Stage 1. You are ably supported by your senior leaders in raising teachers' expectations of what pupils' can achieve in order to bring about the desired improvements. You maintain the full confidence of a governing body that is similarly embracing the challenge to hold the school more robustly to account.

The school's accurate self-evaluation process ensures that strengths identified within some areas of the school are being used well to support and improve those aspects of the school that are not yet good. For example, the same engaging approach taken by teachers in Key Stage 2 in planning their curriculum has now been successfully adopted by teachers in Key Stage 1. This is beginning to show improved pupil engagement in lessons and a gradual improvement in their attendance. However, you have not made clear in your improvement plan how you intend to develop middle and subject leaders' expertise and hold them to account for school improvement initiatives.

Communication systems between you and the governing body have been strengthened further since the inspection. For example, the introduction of your monthly headteacher reports to governors which tracks the progress of the school improvement plan is well received. This regular communication is allowing governors to develop an accurate understanding of the work taking place in the school and, in turn, allows them to deploy their time more efficiently towards any remaining weaknesses, such as working more closely with parents and carers in improving attendance.

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 continues to provide timely and appropriate support to the school and this is appreciated by staff and governors. Subject advisors are working closely with teachers, particularly those new to the school, to support and strengthen the development of literacy and mathematics provision. The school is also benefiting

from the effective support of the local authority education welfare officer in helping to raise and sustain pupils' attendance.

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

Yours sincerely

David Edwards

Her Majesty's Inspector