

Tribal  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 0117 311 5359  
**Direct F** 0117 315 0430  
**Email:** christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

27 January 2014

Mrs L Winterton  
Headteacher  
Rodmell Church of England Primary School  
Rodmell  
Lewes  
East Sussex  
BN7 3HF

Dear Mrs Winterton

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rodmell Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 November 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:

- ensure that teachers' expectations of pupils are always high in all subjects across the curriculum.

**Evidence**

During the visit, I spoke with you, the deputy headteacher, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated key documents, such as the school improvement plan, governors' minutes and the data showing how much progress pupils are making. We also visited lessons and looked at pupils' work together.

## **Main findings**

You and the deputy headteacher work together in an effective partnership. Together, you lead the school with strong moral purpose, clear about what you are trying to achieve and why. You are rightly very interested in all aspects of pupils' development, from their self-esteem and physical prowess to improving their English and mathematics. The school is well-organised on both on day-to-day and strategic levels. You make good use of limited space and the school is full of interesting areas and nooks and crannies which pupils use independently. The infant class, which spans both the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, is well structured to ensure that pupils gain the experiences and specific teaching they each need. Key whole-school systems, such as those for improvement planning, tracking pupils' progress and staff performance management are adeptly organised. It was good to hear of the useful training opportunities now being offered to staff. You are working closely and effectively alongside teachers to improve their practice, which remains mixed. However, teachers' marking of pupils' work now appears much more consistently good and useful. You seem to know all pupils well and can explain their respective needs and levels of progress. The school is clearly an agreeable place to learn, grow and work.

We discussed together the improvement points from the November inspection. You and the deputy headteacher were able to provide clear evidence of firm actions which have been taken since then, including a re-adjusted improvement plan. Monitoring of teaching quality has already sharpened.

When we looked at work together, and visited lessons, we agreed that teachers' expectations of pupils need to be higher. For example, in a recent task involving writing a letter of complaint, pupils were not sure enough about the sort of formal language needed, and they used more familiar vernacular, inappropriate to the task. In the physical education and music lessons we observed together, pupils enjoyed the activities about street dance and rap but these were not sufficiently challenging or rapidly paced enough to improve their skills and understanding.

It seems clear that expecting more of pupils, or as one governor adeptly put it in a later discussion, 'taking pupils further from their comfort zone', is key to making the improvements that the inspection identified are needed in pupils' attainment. Some activities are challenging but others are not. We agreed that you and the deputy headteacher need to make improving this position a key focus of your work with all staff for the foreseeable future.

Pupils' progress in English and mathematics is mixed. It is at its best in reading. You and the staff, however, now intervene much more swiftly when individual pupils make less progress than expected. Pupil premium money is used imaginatively and the pupils entitled to its support continue to progress reasonably well.

The governing body is well organised and represents the church and community closely. Its members are involved purposefully in the school's strategic planning and ask increasingly challenging questions of the school. These are better recorded in the minutes of meetings. Governors' planned visits to the school are helpfully and specifically linked to the revised school improvement plan. With you and the deputy headteacher, governors arranged a useful meeting for parents after the inspection.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I will continue to discuss the development of the school with you.

### **External support**

Local authority support is used effectively by the school. The local authority is usefully brokering training and visits to other schools for staff, which have potential to help raise their expectations of the pupils at Rodmell. It was agreed that the termly formal visits to the school by the local authority adviser will look specifically at raising expectations of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**