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13 February 2014

Pauline Batley
Headteacher
St James' CofEVA Primary School
Guildford Road
Colchester
Essex
CO1 2RA

Dear Mrs Batley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St James' CEVA Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 February 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 make sure:

- all staff understand how to meet the targets in the school action plan
- teachers always apply their good teaching approaches in every lesson
- senior leaders and governors check that all improvements introduced since the inspection are making a difference to pupils' achievement.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated and we observed teaching in all the classes.

Context

Since the inspection one teacher is on sickness leave. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and will take up her post in April.

Main findings

Since the Section 5 inspection you have met with teachers to discuss how to improve the quality of their teaching. You have given them precise guidance on what is good about their teaching and what they need to do to improve. As a result teachers understand what to do and are beginning to put into practice the good advice you are giving them. This more rigorous approach to monitoring teaching is beginning to have an impact because pupils are making better progress in each year group. However there remain inconsistencies for example in how teachers plan learning for the different ability groups in their classes and pupils are not always being given enough time in lessons to respond to teachers' marking. Teaching has improved in the Early Years Foundation Stage because teachers have received training from local authority advisers and visited good schools to see how they organise children's learning.

Teachers have had training in how to improve pupils' handwriting and as a result the work in pupils' books is neater, better presented and pupils say they are proud of their work. Teachers are also beginning to model good handwriting when they write comments in pupils' books. Pupils' attendance has improved since the Section 5 inspection and you continue to work closely with the local authority to further reduce pupil absence.

The governors support the school well and are beginning to challenge you more effectively. This is because they have a better understanding of how to check whether or not the action you are taking is improving pupils' achievement.

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

You are drawing well upon the external support provided by the local authority through the improvement board. You are working with a local good school to check the quality of pupils' work and one teacher is attending a teaching course at an outstanding school. It is too soon to judge whether these links with other schools are having a good impact on pupils' achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector