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25 February 2014

Mrs Helen Crolla  
Benson Church of England Primary School  
Oxford Road  
Wallingford  
OX10 6LX

Dear Mrs Crolla

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

Following my visit to your school on 25 February 2015, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 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 all staff are held to account routinely and work as a team to refine their own and each other's teaching paying close attention to detail and the learning of individual children.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, your chair of governors and members of staff to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Six lessons were observed and many pupils' work books were scrutinised. The outcomes of performance management were discussed.

## **Main findings**

Work to improve the ethos of the school and pupils' behaviour has been successful. Pupils expect to work and to learn in the school and take quiet pleasure in their studies. They are taught from Reception onwards to be independent and considerate of others. As they progress through the school their positive attitudes are enabling them to use their learning time very well. In most lessons seen, pupils' focussed concentration on the task in hand was a contributory factor to their good learning.

Most teachers are using their knowledge of their pupils to make sure that the work individuals are asked to do is at just the right level of challenge. For example, in a mathematics lesson when pupils were weighing sand to find its mass some pupils were expected to find weight combinations to reach complex high numbers, while others were working with smaller simpler numbers.

Teachers and pupils alike are clear about what they need to achieve. In the best examples the wall space in classrooms was creatively used to broadcast pupils' targets and successes as well as offering additional stimulus and ideas. Pupils use these to follow up interests and gain a wider understanding of the topic being studied. A display about Ted Hughes' work was, for example, used to stimulate pupils to undertake wider reading as part of a lesson on his story 'The Iron Man'. In this way and through the careful match of activity to pupil, children of all abilities are well supported in their learning.

The pinpointing of individual pupils' needs is enhanced by the schools' careful tracking of the progress made by pupils, which enables staff to help any who are falling behind or confused by a particular issue. Teachers are properly held to account for the progress that each pupil makes by the headteacher. Data demonstrating progress are considered by the senior leadership team and governors when making decisions about the management of the school.

Teaching assistants are more active in leading groups and working alongside teachers to reinforce learning and challenge more able children. They are better briefed by teachers about what to do, what questions to ask and how to help their pupils learn. They are in a good position now to work with teachers to develop different strategies for individual pupils.

Staff at the school are now working more closely together. Teachers, teaching assistants and leaders demonstrate a shared understanding of the main work of the school. Inconsistencies in approaches have been ironed out, and, while not all teachers are as successful as each other, every teacher adheres to basic standards of sound practice. This is particularly evident in respect of the marking and feedback given to pupils which is clear, helpful and consistent across the school. Pupils' work shows that pupils have begun to learn from this feedback and use it to do better next time. This has speeded up their progress in learning.

Middle leaders are taking a greater leadership role with success. This now needs to be extended so that teachers and teaching assistants actively seek to challenge themselves and each other about aspects of their work that can be improved. An increased attention to detail for example, around the use of technical language and clarity of explanation would further improve some teaching.

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**

Mrs Crolla has been well supported by a local headteacher. The local authority has offered support to individual teachers and has appropriately monitored the progress of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Emma Ing  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**