

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 3115307
Direct email: rachel.evans@tribalgroup.com

28 February 2014

Mrs D Cockrean
Headteacher (Acting)
Longford CofE (VC) Primary School
High Road
Britford
Salisbury
SP5 4DS

Dear Mrs Cockrean

Special measures monitoring inspection of Longford Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 February 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, representatives from the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were also evaluated.

Context

The school is currently without a permanent headteacher. A headteacher from another nearby school has taken on the role of acting headteacher for two and a half days each week. Since the inspection a permanent teacher has resigned and left the school. As a result, pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are currently being taught by three supply teachers. The governing body has undergone significant restructuring following a review of governance.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The local authority statement of action and the school improvement plan were presented to the inspector as one document. Although the plan sets out the school's key priorities it does not make explicit the exact timings when each improvement initiative will take place. Nor does it make clear what role the local authority has in monitoring the work of the school, or the intended impact this may have on raising pupils' standards.

Members of the governing body are acutely aware of the need to secure strong and consistent leadership for the school. Not having a permanent operational lead within the school full time is the Chair of the Governing Body's single biggest concern at the present time. Governors also say they have been frustrated with the slow progress in securing a full-time replacement teacher for the oldest pupils. They are rightly concerned that until these two important posts are filled progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report will be more difficult to achieve.

The external review of governance has resulted in changes to the way governors conduct their business. Following the review, training has been provided by a local authority governor advisor and a National Leader of Governance (NLG). This has been well received and linked to monitoring the work of the school. As a result, governors say they now possess a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are already exhibiting greater confidence in holding senior leaders and the local authority to account. A governing body action plan has been recently drafted, which now needs to be incorporated into the school improvement plan.

Communications between members of the governing body and the acting headteacher are very positive. Governors say they now enjoy an open and honest working relationship with the acting headteacher and this has allowed them to be more probing and confident in holding the school more effectively to account. It has also shown where there is still work to be done. The school improvement plan is rightly focused on responding to the findings of the inspection. However, we agreed that a time-line is needed to incorporate the work of all stakeholders and identify clear milestones for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the work being carried out in the school. Senior leaders and the local authority understand this would be beneficial in promoting a greater sense of shared ownership for stakeholders and allow senior leaders to effectively identify and manage any slippage that may occur. I will make the monitoring of the school's improvement plan a focus of my next monitoring visit.

You and the Chair of the Governing Body rightly acknowledge the biggest challenge currently facing the school is to secure stable leadership and consistency in high-

quality teaching provision. Having been unsuccessful in attracting a new teacher to the school you were, however, able to demonstrate the capacity needed to support a newly qualified teacher available from within your local cluster of good and outstanding schools. This was also confirmed by the local authority representative. Consequently, I agree to you interviewing a newly qualified teacher should a suitable candidate apply for the post when you next advertise. Inevitably, a lack of permanent leadership means instability remains the key issue within the school at the present time. However, during my visit I found a determination and willingness, from you and from those I spoke with, to push ahead with appointing permanent staff in order to move the school on to become a good school as quickly as possible.

Finally, you also reported the meeting for parents that took place following the publication of the inspection report was well attended and that they remain highly appreciative and supportive of the school. However, there is understandably a growing anxiety about how long the good will of parents will last. To this end, a communication plan to keep parents well informed and involved has been agreed with governors, although this has yet to be implemented.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose but needs further refinement to incorporate a detailed plan of monitoring and evaluation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose but requires further work to incorporate a timeline and the actions of the governing body, the Diocese and other external partners.

The school may appoint a newly qualified teacher before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Wiltshire and the Diocese of Salisbury. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector