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12 March 2014

Nicola Bramley  
Headteacher  
Isleham Church of England Primary School  
Malting Lane  
Isleham  
Ely  
CB7 5RZ

Dear Mrs Bramley

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

Following my visit to your school on 11 March 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 pupils of all abilities are challenged to think more deeply by the work that they do in all classes.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, eight members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated the school action plans, minutes of recent governing body meetings, local authority reviews and the school's monitoring and assessment documentation. You accompanied me during visits to all classes in the school, where we observed teaching and looked at pupils' work.

## **Context**

One teacher has left the school since the inspection. A temporary teacher is currently working in the school while a permanent replacement is sought.

## **Main findings**

You are acting swiftly to tackle the issues identified at the recent inspection. Teaching is improving and pupils are making better progress in most year groups.

You are changing the way that teachers plan for pupils of different abilities. In most classes, teachers are now providing pupils with work that is designed to make them think more deeply. Pupils are welcoming this challenge and some say that it is making their learning more enjoyable. However, in a small number of classes there are times when pupils either find the work too hard or too easy. Your changes to the way that teachers mark pupils work are also popular with pupils. Some told me that they enjoy responding to the teachers' comments and that they are clearer now about what they need to do to improve their work. Some of the marking is very detailed and provides pupils with opportunities to practise skills and reinforce the key points from a previous lesson before they embark on new learning.

You are making good use of external support to improve the teaching of mathematics. Teachers are clearer about how to teach this subject, and more time is dedicated to it. In a short period of time, this renewed approach has impacted positively: In all year groups, pupils are making good progress and the current Year 6 are on track to achieve above the national average in this subject. The picture is similarly positive for reading, but standards of writing are more variable across the year groups.

You are currently changing the leadership structure. Your improvement plans are clear about how you see the new structure working but you are not waiting for things to change. You have increased the pace of your own monitoring alongside that of your senior leaders. You have a very accurate understanding of the strengths within the school, as well as where you need to improve further, and are making good use of external support – including that of the local authority – to endorse your evaluations. The governing body are very supportive of school improvements and are increasingly well informed. Their visits to the school and good questioning is supporting this, although the level of challenge that they present to school leaders is often not reflected in the minutes of their meetings.

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 is providing an appropriate level of support for the school. An advisor is supporting you with improvement planning and has met with you to undertake classroom observations and evaluate your assessment information. In addition, mathematics and literacy consultants have visited the school to support improvements in these areas. You have commissioned the support of an external consultant to improve mathematics and self-evaluation.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire

Yours sincerely

Christopher Moodie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**