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Mrs Sharron Morton
Headteacher
Binsted Church of England Primary School
Church Street
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Alton
GU34 4NX

Dear Mrs Morton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Binsted 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 second formal monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2012. 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:

- provide pupils with more regular opportunities to write at length from their own imagination and experience more investigations and problem-solving activities in mathematics
- evaluate the quality and depth of pupils' learning, when checking lessons, rather than the actual teaching. Consider narrowing the focus, on occasions, to what learning is like for different groups.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you to discuss the action taken since the last inspection and the informal visit I made in early October 2013. We observed teaching in

Reception and Years 1, 2 and 3 together and discussed our findings. I observed a lesson in Year 4. Writing and mathematics work from Years 5 and 6 was evaluated, as these pupils were out of school on a trip. Information about all pupils' progress was scrutinised, together with reports from your own observations of lessons.

Context

There have been several changes in teaching staff since the section 5 inspection.

Main findings

The quality of teaching has shown marked improvement in the Reception and Year 1 class, which was a weak area at my last visit in October. The classroom is more lively and enticing and children are encountering a much better balance of activities. Teachers' plans take careful account of the children's different abilities and prior experiences. The teacher is using teaching assistants fully, making sure they are well briefed. One assistant, working with Year 1, used questions effectively to tease out pupils' thinking and check they understood what they were doing. The teacher also used questions very well to develop children's communication skills and draw the quieter members of the group into the discussion. Some opportunities were missed to encourage children's talk when children were using the sand tray and ride-on toys outside.

Pupils' progress has picked up considerably and the school's assessments are leading the headteacher to expect improved results this year for pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6. The headteacher sets her sights high and is keen for pupils to reach aspirational targets. Pupils' pride and engagement in their learning is evident from the well-presented and careful work seen in exercise books. Teachers put a lot of time into marking pupils' work, in good detail, and older pupils write their own comments, in response to their teacher's, showing they take note and consider suggestions. Pupils are not encountering investigations and problem-solving activities on a regular basis in mathematics. Opportunities to write longer pieces of work, based on their own imagination, are also limited. This restricts the chance for the more-able pupils, in particular, to shine.

Teaching has improved because of the headteacher's persistent focus on providing good quality teaching for pupils. She is uncompromising about her high expectations for the team. The headteacher checks lessons regularly and gives teachers helpful guidance about how to improve their teaching. There is less emphasis on the quality of learning to give teachers specific advice on what they could do to lift and enrich pupils' learning even more.

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 headteacher welcomes and values the fresh 'eye' that external support brings to her work in this small school. She has sought training and advice, when necessary, from beyond the school. This has contributed to improvements in teaching and pupils' progress and supported the headteacher's drive and ambition to move the school to good.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector