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Mrs Karen Riordan
Headteacher
Brimscombe Hill
Brimscombe
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Dear Mrs Riordan

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Brimscombe Church of England VA Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Tuesday 25 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 January 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors responsible are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- improve the quality of marking in mathematics books so that pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work
- ensure that the improvements made to the presentation of English books are extended to the work pupils undertake in mathematics
- help pupils understand how they need to improve their work by sharing the National Curriculum levels they are attaining with them and discussing what they need to do to improve.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the literacy and numeracy subject leaders, a group of Year 5 and 6 pupils, eight members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I visited all four classes and looked at a sample of pupils' work. I evaluated the school improvement plan and scrutinised a range of documents.

Context

There have been no changes to the staff since the section 5 inspection report.

Main findings

There has been a significant improvement in school expectations in the way in which pupils present their English work. Handwriting is neater and untidy scribble is reducing because pupils who need to develop their skills are invited to attend a 'Handwriting Hospital'. Pupils talk very positively about these twice weekly sessions and feel very proud when they 'graduate' from this. Teachers also encourage pupils to rewrite work, which is not of an acceptable standard by requesting them to 'turn over a leaf' in their books and start again. Recently parents have been asked to support the drive to improve expectations by agreeing that their children should rewrite untidy work at home. Nevertheless, the presentation of the pupils' work in their mathematics books remains weak. A particular weakness is the inconsistent way in which squared paper is used to record work.

Marking in English books has improved since the inspection and pupils are now given time to look at teachers' comments and make appropriate changes. Although comments, such as 'good ideas – now collaborate and record', provide some helpful advice, feedback still needs to have greater detail and clarity. Comments such as 'short but sweet' are not necessary and make no contribution to developing pupils' learning. The marking in the pupils' mathematics books requires improvement. The few comments that are made in these books are not helpful and there is insufficient attention given to the vast number of worksheets which pupils are required to complete. Pupils do not know the levels they are working at in English and mathematics and this prevents them having the highest aspirations for their own outcomes.

Training by subject specialist teachers from the local authority has been well received by the literacy and numeracy leaders. In light of inspection findings, and in conjunction with key governors, they have revised the improvement plans for their subjects. The literacy and numeracy leaders' attendance at meetings with other local subject leaders and their visit to an outstanding school have improved their understanding of their leadership role. Training planned for early next term has been

organised to help to prepare them for undertaking lesson observations and running staff meetings.

The outcome of the inspection was a disappointment to all members of the community and some have found it hard to come to terms with. As fiercely proud members of the local community, governors demonstrate a determination to make this school outstanding. There is a developing understanding that this can only be achieved if the pupils receive the best possible education and achieve the outcomes they deserve. Governors have sensibly used the inspection to focus their support and challenge. Working effectively alongside the headteacher and the local authority officer, the governors have been proactive in tightening procedures for tracking and checking pupil progress. Additional training has been welcomed, particularly with the interpretation of data, which has helped them ask more challenging questions to subject leaders. Meetings are focused purposefully on improvement and the governing body's effective communication with parents has enabled all stakeholders to understand and support the work of the school.

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

Prior to the inspection the local authority was already providing extra support and this has now been strengthened. Regular meetings ensure that the headteacher and governors are receiving the right balance of challenge and support. Visits to a local outstanding school, support from specialist teachers and an external consultant have all encouraged teachers to reflect on their own practice and, as a result, they are making appropriate improvements to secure the best outcomes for their pupils.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire local authority and Gloucester Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector