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Mrs Helen Fletcher-Reilly
Headteacher
St Margaret's CofE Primary School
The Mardens
Crawley
RH11 0AQ

Dear Mrs Fletcher-Reilly

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Margaret's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 April 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 January 2014. 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. Further actions needed by the school are shown below.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders, as well as representatives of the Governing Body and the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. We made short visits to lessons across the school together, inside and outside of classrooms, looking at pupils' work. I evaluated school documents, including the school improvement plan, Governing Body minutes and data about pupils' academic progress.

Main findings

Pupils in this school benefit greatly from a lively and motivating curriculum. They enjoy finding out and exploring. I saw them enjoying many worthwhile activities including a worm hunt; interesting writing tasks, including one based on cello music performed by a pupil; mathematics investigations; singing and art modelling of a large giraffe. The school's Christian foundation supports pupils' spiritual development well. The school site, indoors and outdoors, is well developed as an exciting learning environment. Pupils work together willingly, behave well and are enthused about their learning. All of these strengths in the school, and the styles of teaching associated with them, have come about as a result of clear, principled, leadership by yourself and others, as well as much worthwhile thought and research amongst the staff.

You have also put in place appropriate management systems. Performance management of staff is suitably organised; data about pupils' progress is systematically gathered; there is a regular round of observations of teaching by senior staff. We discussed how the format for recording these observations might be improved. A form which is largely blank might help senior staff to evaluate more effectively what they actually see rather than being constrained by the form itself; there could also be different forms for different purposes. Senior and middle management roles are carefully organised: there are leaders for inclusion, age phases and all subjects. Since the January inspection, the school improvement planning has been improved - but its scope needs to be broadened, to include all the key improvement areas. Marking of pupils' work shows improvement also. The Governing Body is well organised and asks suitably challenging questions of you and the senior staff to keep you on your toes.

The school, therefore, has many strengths and continues to move forward. And yet, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is average and their achievement is not yet good. We saw, for example, that older pupils' writing could be better and more tidily presented. Sometimes their letters were incorrectly formed. Pupils entitled to pupil premium funding do about as well as their peers. Overall test and assessment results, whilst not being low, require improvement. We discussed the reasons for this, given the school's strengths. You and I, with the governing body and the local authority, came to agree that the key to improvement is to make sure that the school's existing systems work more sharply and tightly. The systems themselves do not need to be re-made. Equally, the curriculum must not be narrowed, as this would be to the considerable detriment of pupils.

The school should take action to:

- put in place a new school improvement plan for September 2014 which has very sharply written and concise, timed targets or objectives;

these targets need to be about outcomes for pupils not actions by staff (and not necessarily just test or formal assessment results); the actions for staff in the plan then need to support the targets set

- ensure that systems for staff performance management provide adults with both support and precise accountability for the progress made by pupils
- draw out more clearly the key messages about the performance of all pupils, and groups of pupils, from the school's data, so that staff and governors know clearly what is going well and what is not
- ensure that senior leaders' formal observations of lessons are focused on how well all pupils learn, more than what staff members do
- ensure that pupils' writing is always neat and well formed
- continue to train and empower all subject leaders to raise expectations further in their subjects.

I suggest, and you agree, that it would be useful for the school to engage an expert consultant to work alongside you for about a year, to help you to make these improvements. To be quite clear, this is not because you and the staff could not do this work by yourselves, but to give a fresh pair of eyes at an important time.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I agreed with you that I will make a brief, unreported, visit to the school in September 2014 to check the new school improvement plan, look at the presentation of pupils' work and discuss with you how the school has made progress. I will then make a further, longer visit in about a year, which is likely to be reported. Other than this I will keep in touch by telephone and/or email.

External support

The advice and support from the local authority continues to develop and improve. A new local authority officer has just been assigned to work with you. She is ready to support the school in improving the effectiveness of the systems and in checking on the progress you make. The local authority also is ready to support the school in choosing a consultant to work with it.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex and the Diocese of Chichester.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector