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8 May 2014

Mrs Joyce Rhodes  
St Peter's Church of England Primary School  
Mount Pleasant  
Aylesford  
ME20 7BE

Dear Mrs Rhodes

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Peter's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 7 May 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 monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 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 last section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- analyse the checks on reading, mathematics and writing in different year groups to identify where progress is slower and take appropriate action so that all pupils make rapid progress.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit I met with you, five governors and a local authority advisor. You and I spent most of the morning observing the teaching and learning in all of the classes. We also looked at the most recent information about how well pupils are achieving in reading, writing and mathematics. Other information such as records of monitoring, including governors' monitoring visit reports, was also available.

## **Main findings**

Since September there has been a complete change of teaching staff, including the headteacher, and therefore in many ways, the school is a very different place to the one I visited in March 2013 and which was inspected in January 2013. Other changes have included the organisation of the school day which has resulted in a calm and purposeful start. Pupils are welcomed, go immediately to their classrooms and learning starts straight away. For example, during my visit there were lively sessions for the younger pupils who were keen to demonstrate their knowledge of sounds, letters and words.

During the morning we visited a number of mathematics lessons where pupils of all ages were developing their problem solving skills using numbers, calculation strategies and, for the oldest pupils, their understanding of algebra. These sessions had well matched activities and opportunities for pupils to think about and use their knowledge of mathematics to solve problems. There was plenty of challenge to extend their understanding. Pupils and staff treat each other with respect and pupils are confident to have a go even when they might not get the answers straight away. There was a rapid pace of learning in most of the sessions we visited. However, although pupils in Years 2 and 6 have made rapid progress since September, the progress has not been as fast in the other year groups.

You have quickly developed a strong team approach and this is commendable given the uncertainties, major changes, leafleting campaigns and misinformation which have threatened to undermine the school's progress. Staff training has been appropriate and teachers are all using the agreed policies such as the behaviour management, lesson planning and marking systems. There is still some variability in the quality and impact of marking in terms of how well it supports pupils in improving their work.

Governors have provided continuity during a period of instability. They are closely involved in school life, visit regularly and are increasingly strong and valued partners in the improvement process. They have undertaken training so that they are more knowledgeable and have a realistic view about how well the school is doing and where further improvements are needed. They are currently advertising for a substantive headteacher and have secured your agreement to remain at the school in the meantime so that the transition of leadership is as smooth as possible. All of the senior leaders are well aware that there is much more to do but things are going in the right direction.

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**

A major change this year has been in improving the assessment, identification and provision for pupils who have special educational needs. In this work, the school benefits from the expertise of an experienced inclusion manager from a neighbouring school. This is just one example of a major change whereby the school is becoming part of the wider educational community. For example, the school has joined a collaboration of local schools and shares knowledge and expertise at staff and leadership level with this group. The local authority has brokered arrangements to strengthen leadership and provides regular advisory support. Other important external support has been provided by a colleague from a nearby academy. This has ensured that the group of relatively inexperienced teachers receive good support so that they are getting off to a good start in their teaching careers.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald

**Her Majesty's Inspector**