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Mrs M Palmer
St Laurence in Thanet Church of England Junior School
Newington Road
Ramsgate
CT11 0QX

Dear Mrs Palmer

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Laurence in Thanet Church of England Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 16 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 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 trustees are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- Sharpen the school action plan so it makes a clear distinction between actions and their intended impact
- Ensure the plan includes a clear timeline for actions and targets for pupils' achievement that will enable the impact of actions to be evaluated at key times

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and other senior leaders, trustees and a representative of the academy sponsor to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I scrutinised a range of documents including the school's improvement

plan, students' progress data and your external review of your use of pupil premium funding. We briefly visited some lessons around the school to see teaching and learning.

Context

Both you and deputy headteacher have been appointed to substantive posts since the previous inspection. A new chair of trustees has also been appointed.

Main findings

You and your senior leaders are clear about what needs to be done to make the school good and are responding accordingly. These responses build well on the improvements that were recognised in the inspection report. However, your school improvement plan does not make a clear enough distinction between actions and intended outcome; neither does it define the precise timescales for the improvements. Further development is needed for it to become an effective tool to support you in monitoring and evaluating progress.

Senior leaders are making good use of your existing systems for checking the quality of teaching to identify where further improvements are needed. The introduction of increasingly rigorous termly pupil progress meetings has helped. Teachers and support staff are being provided with suitable and responsive support and training which include opportunities for them to learn from your strongest practitioners. As a result teaching is improving. For example, pupils now have more opportunities to develop their mathematical thinking through using visual representations of mathematical concepts. They have told you that this is helping them to learn better.

Teachers are improving their understanding of the progress to be expected of pupils in different subjects based on their individual starting points. Consequently they are more able to plan lessons that have high expectations of all pupils. Your recent investment in tablet technology for use in lessons is enabling teachers to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop ICT skills in their day-to-day work.

Your approaches to developing provision for those with special educational needs are well considered. You have reviewed and adapted the support you are providing for these pupils and other pupils who have fallen behind. You have ensured that appropriate training is in place to enable this support to be effective. Teaching assistants are now more usefully involved in identifying pupils' next steps in learning and where extra support is needed.

Academy data indicate that more pupils are starting to make the progress expected of them and that those eligible for Pupil Premium funding are catching up with their peers. Your recent external review of the use of pupil premium funding identifies

the need for you to clearly specify the intended outcomes for pupils of planned expenditure.

You are providing trustees with increasingly useful progress updates and they are gaining a better understanding of the academy by making regular visits. They are therefore now starting to hold you to account more effectively. They recognise the need to ensure that they fully understand and can interpret external data published about the school.

External support

You have utilised appropriate leadership development programmes to help you and your deputy headteacher establish yourselves in your relatively new roles. A school improvement officer from the academy sponsor provides helpful regular monitoring visits and support for teaching and leadership development. Your involvement in a local school improvement partnership and staff attendance at local authority network meetings is helping you to ensure a range of suitable external expertise is accessed. Working with other schools on the development of better approaches to teaching mathematics is a good example of this.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Kent, the Directors of Education for the Diocese of Canterbury and the DFE Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Diana Choulerton
Her Majesty's Inspector