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10 September 2014

Graham White
Headteacher
Hurst Green Church of England Primary School
London Road
Etchingham
TN19 7PN

Dear Mr White

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hurst Green Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 September 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 November 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.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and the vice chair of governors. I had a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority and a representative from the diocese attended the feedback at the end of the visit. You and I spent a short time in each of the classes and I had lunch with pupils. I also evaluated a number of documents including the school's improvement plan and information about how well pupils are achieving in mathematics, writing and reading. We discussed the school's revised approach to curriculum planning, assessment and your systems for tracking behaviour and safeguarding.

Context

Since my last visit two teachers have left the school and have been replaced. The amount of time teaching assistants work in the school has increased and a higher level teaching assistant has been appointed.

Main findings

The checks on pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills carried out at the end of the summer term, including the results of national tests, show welcome improvements. This is particularly the case in mathematics which had been identified as a weaker area at the time of the section 5 inspection. The results for Year 6 pupils who left last term were particularly pleasing. Year 2 pupils made considerable gains during the summer term which went some way to making up for slow progress earlier in the year. A more rigorous and accurate approach to tracking and checking on pupils' achievement means that school leaders know the strengths and areas for further development. For example, your analysis shows that pupils' skills in writing are weaker than reading and mathematics in all age groups. You have also introduced a more rigorous approach to recording, analysing and acting on the very few concerns, incidents of bullying and poor behaviour that occur.

You have challenged underperformance and provided training and support to enable staff to improve where possible. Teaching assistants have received training to enable them to make a stronger contribution in their enhanced roles. Although our visits to classrooms were brief, it was pleasing to see that positive relationships have already been established and the vast majority of pupils throughout the school were eagerly involved in purposeful activities.

The school's self-evaluation document is very detailed and shows what actions have been taken over last year but it does not show sufficiently well what difference the actions made to pupils' achievement. It would be useful for staff and governors to consider how well the school is doing and what evidence there is to support their judgements. The improvement plan is sharply focused on addressing the school's relative weaknesses. You have revised the curriculum and assessment systems ahead of the national requirements and these changes are also included in the school's plan. There are measurable milestones and targets so that everyone, including governors should be able to evaluate whether actions are resulting in improvements in outcomes for pupils.

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 school has benefitted from local authority support. This has been particularly valuable in ensuring that assessments are accurate and well used to drive improvement. Additional consultant support has varied in its effectiveness.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald

Her Majesty's Inspector