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Penny Smith  
Executive headteacher  
Rivenhall Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Church Road  
Rivenhall  
Witham  
CM8 3PQ

Dear Mrs Smith

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rivenhall Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 23 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 May 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.

The school should take further action to:

- improve the school's improvement plans by setting clear deadlines for improvement and more measures of impact that governors and others can use to determine the school's progress
- ensure there is a detailed plan to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged and supported in all lessons to achieve their best and make good progress

- ensure that leaders build a clear picture of the quality of teaching overtime which includes evidence from lesson observations, drop-ins, work scrutiny and the analysis of achievement data
- ensure that helpful feedback to teachers is followed up quickly to ensure that matters have improved
- ensure the governing body, diocese, local authority and school community work together to finalise the future status of the school and its leadership arrangements

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you and the executive school leader. We toured the classrooms together. I met with five members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I had a telephone discussion with a representative of the Diocese of Chelmsford. I looked at documents including the school's improvement plans, achievement data and records of your monitoring activities. I checked the safeguarding procedures for the appointment of new members of staff.

## **Context**

The leadership and staffing of the school has undergone significant change since the section 5 inspection in May 2014. The executive headteacher was appointed and the headteacher left the school at the end of the summer term. The executive leader began working with the executive headteacher to lead the school in September 2014.

The deputy headteacher left the school at the end of the summer term along with four other teachers. Of the teachers in place at the time of the inspection, only one of them remains in post. The others have been replaced by permanent teachers including one who is newly qualified. Five learning support assistants left the school in September 2014.

## **Main findings**

The leadership team of the executive headteacher and executive leader have quickly secured the confidence of governors, parents and staff. There is a positive atmosphere in the school. The school's new leadership team have experience of school improvement and are beginning to share good practice from the linked school. There are plans to form closer links overtime and share expertise between the two schools. The experience and expertise of the linked school is adding much needed capacity including for improving leadership.

Teachers and leaders have quickly recognised that some pupils have significant gaps in their learning. The school has begun the process of setting challenging targets for each of the pupils through very regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress. Leaders work with teachers to assess pupils according to the new national curriculum expectations. This is providing a clear baseline from which progress can be measured. Leaders have put in place some key expectations of lessons including that pupils will have more regular opportunities to practice and improve their writing and more opportunities to investigate number and problem solve in mathematics. A meeting is planned to formulate the school's marking policy.

Leaders are focused on raising the quality of teaching and they visit classrooms very regularly to monitor first-hand. Teachers receive written feedback when longer observations have been conducted. The school now needs to build a profile of teaching overtime by recording all of the evidence from their monitoring activities and linking this to achievement data and evidence from pupils' work. When teachers' feedback includes areas for improvement, school leaders need to re-visit quickly to ensure that progress has been made in addressing weaknesses.

Governors have a good understanding of their strategic role in supporting, monitoring and challenging the school. They realise that they need to continue to improve their own effectiveness. Governors are ambitious for the school and they recognise that the school's improvement plans do not have enough deadlines or measures of intended impact for governors and others to check the progress of the school. Additionally, the improvement plans do not include enough detail about how teaching for the more able pupils will improve.

The necessary pre-employment safeguarding checks are completed and recorded diligently.

The governors, local authority and diocese plan to work together to consider the future status of the school and its leadership arrangements. This work should be completed with urgency to provide clarity for all members of the school community.

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 local authority identified the school as causing concern prior to the section 5 inspection and secured the support of the executive headteacher. They have since brokered the leadership team with the agreement of the diocese until decisions are made about the future status of the school.

Prior to the section 5 inspection the local authority offered support to improve leadership and teaching, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage but the staff team has since changed. As a school that requires improvement the local authority

monitors progress through termly visits. The school will also have access to additional commissioned support to improve leadership and teaching

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Essex and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Chelmsford.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**