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Mr G Hamilton
Executive Headteacher
Lady Modiford's Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School
Walkhampton
Yelverton
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Dear Mr Hamilton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lady Modiford's Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 October 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 June 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:

- implement swiftly the planned programme of support to improve teaching that is less than good
- amend the school's action plan to set out more clearly what each member of the senior leadership team is expected to do
- ensure that teachers' marking in English and mathematics books tells pupils how to improve their work and is followed up routinely
- extend the current guidance displayed in classrooms so that all pupils, especially the most able, are helped to tackle the more demanding work.

Evidence

During the inspection, we visited each classroom, spoke informally with pupils and looked at their written work in books. I met with you, pupils, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's action plan was evaluated along with recent assessment information and the records of the checks made by governors and the local authority.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, the head of teaching and learning has left and her responsibilities have been reallocated. The membership of the senior leadership team has been increased to involve more staff. Two teachers have left the school and three teachers have joined. One governor has joined the governing body.

Main findings

You have acted decisively, supported by the governing body, so that more staff are playing a part in improving the quality of education in the school. The new leadership roles have strengthened links with the partner school and begun to raise everybody's expectations. The school's most recent assessment information shows that pupils' achievement is improving. The classrooms are arranged more purposefully and the youngest children are making better use of the facilities outdoors to develop important skills. In lessons, pupils make more use of the guidance on display, but this is not tailored closely enough to pupils' different capabilities. You have acted swiftly to utilise the strengths of individual teachers, but you need to act with greater urgency to improve weaker teaching.

The governing body has a clearer understanding of the school's work. There is a well-structured programme of checks in place that enables the governing body to consider evidence from a range of sources. Governors' visits to the school are more rigorous because governors make good use of the questions set out in the action plan to guide their activities. The Action Plan Monitoring Committee reviews the progress of the action plan frequently. However, several actions do not note what each member of the senior leadership team is expected to do so it difficult for governors and the local authority to hold individuals to account.

The school's action plan, drawn up with the support of the local authority, is fit for purpose. Timescales are ambitious and the actions being taken link closely to the main issues arising from the section 5 inspection. The revised targets are more demanding and set out clearly the improvement necessary for the school to become a good school as quickly as possible.

You have begun to meet with small groups of parents to gauge their views on the school's work. Your response to these meetings has improved pupils' behaviour at each end of the school day. This was evident during the inspection where pupils were well supervised while they left the school in an orderly manner.

Teachers are paying more attention to improving pupils' spelling, handwriting and presentation. While the majority of the work seen in books was neat, not enough of the older pupils have mastered a suitable handwriting style. Occasionally, staff do not correct younger pupils that use an inappropriate pencil grip which hinders their formation of letters. Recently, the school has received training from the local authority to improve the teaching of writing, but it is too early to gauge the difference that it has made. Pupils report that they are being given harder work. This is particularly evident in mathematics where the judicious use of a specialist teacher from a local secondary school has increased pupils' confidence and improved their understanding of important ideas. While teachers' marking in books is more consistent, it does not routinely help pupils to improve their work.

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 maintains close checks on the school's progress through a structured programme of support that was initiated before the section 5 inspection. The good level of challenge provided by officers has led to senior leaders setting more challenging targets for pupils. The increased challenge has also raised the school's aspirations of what pupils can achieve and contributed to the early signs of improvement in the teaching of writing and mathematics across the school. Teachers are beginning to question pupils to check the effectiveness of their teaching as a result of training provided by local authority. When visiting the school, local authority personnel identify further actions the school's leaders should take, but they do always state clearly which leader is responsible for seeing things through. Consequently, not all of the support available has been taken up promptly.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector