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Juliet Jones (Acting Headteacher)
Cubbington CofE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Jones

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cubbington CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 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 July 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:

- reduce the number of school improvement documents being used to make it easier to track the effectiveness of the actions being taken
- include more opportunities for problem solving activities in mathematics, including in the 'next steps' marking
- develop a more rigorous system for recording the checks that are made on the quality of teaching
- share the good practice in marking more widely to improve the level of consistency between classes and subjects

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the Key Stage 1 leader, three representatives from the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans were evaluated. We visited a number of classrooms to talk to pupils and look at the work in their books.

Context

Since the inspection in July the headteacher has had periods of sick leave and you have been the Acting Headteacher. A temporary Key Stage 2 leader is in place from within the staff to cover your role. A supply teacher is covering your class teaching role.

Main findings

You have risen to the challenge of the role of acting headteacher with determination and pragmatism. You have a realistic view of the improvements that need to be made and have set about taking appropriate action. These actions are laid out in a range of different documents. This makes it difficult for you to keep track of the actions that are being most effective. During our discussions you developed a single format that you will use to collate your improvement plans and have agreed to send this to me when it is completed.

Regular checks are being made on the quality of teaching and on the difference that your actions are making to the progress that pupils make. You have an accurate view of the impact of your work however the system of recording the evidence of your checks is not rigorous enough.

Senior leaders and governors are aware that all staff need to have higher expectations of how much progress pupils can make. This has been made clear to all staff through their performance management targets and there are plans in place to have more frequent pupil progress meetings to check this is happening. Additionally you have set challenging progress targets for the current Year 6 and Year 2 pupils and for children in the Reception class.

Where marking is at its best, in Year 4, teachers explain concisely what pupils have done well and give clear instructions about what can be done to make the work even better. Pupils respond by making the improvements or having a go at the 'next step' that has been suggested. This is not yet consistent across the school and is currently better developed in English than in mathematics.

On order to improve pupils' spelling skills teachers correct misspelled words and expect pupils to rewrite them correctly. This is a consistent strategy across the school. Additionally, new resources have been purchased to support teachers in the teaching of spelling and to motivate pupils. Termly spellings are sent home so that parents can support learning. It is too soon to fully measure the impact of this work however during our visits to classrooms pupils said that these strategies are helping them to improve.

Handwriting and presentation remain variable across the school. Some pupils take pride in their work, join their handwriting neatly and consistently and set it out in an attractive way. However many pupils are sloppy with their handwriting, cross out their work untidily when they make a mistake and do not use a ruler when underlining or in their mathematics work.

As a result of guidance from senior leaders, some teachers provide pupils with opportunities to apply their calculation skills in problem solving activities. However this remains too infrequent and inconsistent between classes. Opportunities are missed to move pupils on quickly to problem solving activities within the lesson once they have mastered a calculation strategy or in the advice given in marking

In Reception class a new system of recording information about pupils' progress has been introduced. The Reception class staff have benefitted from gathering ideas on this new system from an outstanding setting they visited. This system, using colour coded assessment sheets, is enabling teachers and teaching assistants to keep a careful check that they are collecting evidence for pupils in all seven areas of learning. The books that were scrutinised during the inspection showed a good amount and range of evidence being collected. Additionally, the Reception teacher reported that the introduction of an electronic system for recording evidence using iPads has been very helpful and time efficient.

Governors that met with me during the inspection demonstrated a clear understanding that a greater focus must be placed on checking on the progress that pupils make. They are also aware that teachers must have higher expectations of pupils. Governors are knowledgeable about the targets that have been set for the current Year 6 and Year 2. Evidence from the minutes of meetings show that governors have asked senior leaders searching questions to check that these targets are sufficiently challenging. The acting headteacher and local authority advisor have supported the governors in developing a programme of activities designed to enable governors to find out for themselves how the school is improving. The review of governance that was recommended at the inspection in July is currently being completed and governors stated their intention to act on the recommendations that are made.

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

Rightly, the local authority advisor has made arrangements to provide an enhanced level of support to the school whilst the headteacher is absent. A review of governance has been commissioned and the support of a local school to help with improving marking has been organised.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Howie
Her Majesty's Inspector