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Mrs Mary Clothier
The Headteacher
Bishops Lydeard Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Mount Street
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Dear Mrs Clothier

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Bishops Lydeard Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 October 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and the senior primary adviser for the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's development plan were evaluated. The inspector accompanied the headteacher on a tour of the school, where short visits were made to all lessons. The inspector also reviewed the school's single central record, which contains checks on the appointment of staff.

Context

Since the previous inspection, one teacher has left and the school has appointed two new teachers and an extra teaching assistant. An additional mixed-age class has been created of pupils in Years 4 and 5 for the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Leaders and managers accept fully the reasons why the school was placed in a category of serious weakness. They are very determined to effect sustained improvement and to ensure that the pace of change is rapid.

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and senior leaders have continued the work which they had already begun to improve pupils' achievement. The headteacher has a good understanding of how this should be done. She has acted quickly, and with enthusiasm, to identify the required changes and to ensure no time was lost at the beginning of term in implementing them. The school's long term plan for improvement sets out clearly the actions which will be taken to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in reading and writing. It is underpinned by detailed plans which show the steps needed to achieve it. The timescales suggested are appropriate and realistic.

During the summer holidays, classrooms were remodelled to ensure that learning could be more effective, support for pupils who needed extra help could be provided more easily, and spaces were made more appropriate for the age group for which they are intended.

The subject leaders now feel fully empowered and are beginning to monitor the work in their areas of responsibility. They are being coached in learning how to observe lessons to identify effective teaching and pupils' learning. The headteacher knows where teaching requires improvement. Her feedback to teachers is providing helpful advice on how to make pupils' learning more effective. The school's checks on pupils' progress are now more comprehensive and stronger processes have been put in place to ensure their accuracy. In the months since the inspection, the school's information on pupils' progress indicates that it has accelerated. The headteacher has rightly placed a strong emphasis upon the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters and combinations of letters make) and literacy. This was evident in the short visits to lessons made by the inspector.

The inspection report recommended that a review of the use of the pupil premium should be undertaken. This is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or those who are in care. This has not yet happened and it is urgent that it should take place as soon as possible. However, the school has taken steps to ensure that those pupils in receipt of pupil premium are identified so they receive additional support quickly.

The governors are fully supportive of the actions of the headteacher. They have recently held a governors' morning where they visited all classrooms, talked to pupils and then considered how far what they had seen was meeting the stated outcomes in the school's plan for improvement. However, the governing body does not yet have a systematic plan of how it will increase its impact on the overall effectiveness of the school. The required external review of the governance is in the process of being completed.

The local authority is providing support for the school through funding a local leader of education. It recognises that the headteacher has the capacity to make the necessary improvements and it has established a small group of local authority officers and a governor to assess progress. However, its statement of action is not fit for purpose. Monitoring and evaluation procedures lack sufficient precision. The plan does not have clear enough measures by which to judge the school's progress. It is not evident how the local authority will evaluate the impact of the work of the school at regular intervals.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The school's development plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Somerset and the Diocese of Bath and Wells. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marcia Headon
Additional Inspector