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10 November 2014

Mrs Lynn Nash
Headteacher
Gunnislake Primary School
Chapel Street
Gunnislake
PL18 9NA

Dear Mrs Nash

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Gunnislake Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 November 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 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:

- ensure governors make full use of the changes and recommendations made in the review of governance
- make sure governors hold the school to account for its work and ensure this information is properly captured in minutes of meetings.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you, your deputy headteacher and members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the most recent inspection. I held a telephone conversation with the local authority representative and spoke with a small group of pupils. Together we carried out brief visits to lessons, and reviewed

pupils' work in their books. The current school improvement plan was also evaluated.

Context

The school is part of the Delaware and Gunnislake Federation with a single governing body. Since the inspection your role as Executive Head Teacher has been made permanent. A temporary full-time teacher has replaced a teacher who left at the end of the summer term. Five governors, including the Chair of Governors, have ended their term of office and three new, experienced governors have been appointed by the local authority.

Main findings

Since the inspection you have worked closely with your leadership team and staff from within the school federation to strengthen teachers' subject expertise. Subject leaders from both schools are working closely together to improve the learning environments and quality of teaching. Teachers have adopted a common approach to the way they plan their lessons in order to secure greater consistency in teaching and learning for pupils. These changes have begun to bring about much needed improvements in the quality and the quantity of pupils' written work, especially at Key Stage 2. The school has been particularly successful in reviewing the way teachers mark pupils' work. During our brief visits to classrooms we saw plenty of good examples in pupils' books where work had been marked effectively by teachers and support staff. Written comments are usually supportive but always make clear to pupils what they need to do next to improve the quality of their work. Pupils who met with me said they found their teachers' marking helped them to see the progress they were making in their work. Pupils also said they appreciate the time they are given at the start of each day to respond to their teachers' marking. You also agree This strategy is helping pupils to show a more positive attitude to learning and take responsibility for their work.

Senior leaders regularly check teachers' lesson plans to make sure pupils' previous learning is always taken into consideration when preparing further work. You are wisely drawing on the expertise of subject specialists and leaders from other schools to improve teachers' expertise and to ensure all staff are kept up to date with changes to the national curriculum. As a result, teachers are now planning lessons more carefully to provide for the full range of pupils' learning needs. Senior leaders frequently check on the progress pupils are making in lessons and in their books. These checks provide you and your governors with a clear understanding of how well pupils of all abilities are progressing in their work. As a school you are just beginning to consider alternative ways to check and record the progress pupils make as they move through the school. Your most recent checks on pupils' work suggest most pupils are on track to achieve their end of year targets.

The way the governing body now operates has significantly changed following a full review of the governing body after the inspection. The review led to five governors ending their term of office and the local authority appointing three new and experienced governors to support and guide governors through this period of change. Governors' meeting minutes do not clearly record how they hold the school effectively to account. The governors who met with me say they have confidence in the work you and your deputy are doing. They are kept well informed by you about the achievement of pupils through a cycle of monthly meetings and well-written reports. The improved communication enables governors to hold the school more effectively to account.

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 is drawing on the expertise of external partners, including a self-evaluation partner and expert practitioners from other schools. The local authority has provided effective and timely support to the school, for example through guiding senior leaders in managing the performance of teachers. The local authority is providing training to governors in order for them to become more confident in their roles and has appointed three experienced governors to the governing body.

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

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector