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18 November 2014

Mrs Clare Rowbotham
Headteacher
Great Casterton CofE Primary School
Pickworth Road
Great Casterton
Stamford
PE9 4AU

Dear Mrs Rowbotham

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Great Casterton CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 November 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:

- amend the school action plan to ensure that the school's strategies to improve the achievement of girls are fully reflected in the plan
- further amend the school action plan to include the school's strategies to ensure that the accuracy of assessment is checked rigorously.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, with other senior leaders, and with representatives of the governing body, including the Chair. Telephone conversations were held with a representative from the local authority and a representative of the diocese. I accompanied you on a tour of the school to observe

children while they were learning, in each class, and also looked at samples of work in pupils' books. A range of school documentation was scrutinised, including the school's action plan.

Main findings

You, your leadership team, and the governing body have responded positively and with determination to address the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection.

With the support of the local authority, you have devised a suitable action plan to set out the school's strategic direction. The plan sets out how pupils' achievement is to be improved, and is linked to challenging targets. However, several minor amendments need to be made to the plan. Although you have begun work to help support the improved achievement of girls in the school, this is not fully reflected in the action plan. The plan emphasises the importance of ensuring that teachers assess pupils' attainment accurately. However, it does not specify how this will be achieved. You have agreed to amend the plan and submit it to me by the end of November 2014.

An external review of governance has been conducted since the last inspection, as required. This has made a positive impact. For example, the governing body has restructured its committees to help it to focus more closely on pupils' achievement. Governors have also completed a skills audit to help decide how their skills will best support and challenge the school's leaders.

You have ensured that the school's marking policy has been reviewed and improved. There is now an increased focus on staff providing pupils with swift feedback about their work, either during lessons, or shortly afterwards. More opportunities have also been arranged for pupils to respond to teachers' written comments, to help accelerate their learning.

Your systems to keep pupils safe were not identified as an area for improvement at the time of the last inspection. However, I note that you have worked with the local authority to help ensure that your staff understand how best to implement the school's safeguarding policy.

You have worked hard to improve communication with parents and carers since the last inspection. For example, you invited parents from each class into the school at the beginning of the current academic year, to meet the teacher and gain a better understanding of the curriculum. You have also worked with parents and carers to help them to understand how the school teaches mathematics and writing. Almost all parents and carers spoken to during the monitoring visit believe that the quality of communication, and the school overall, has improved since the last inspection.

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 has received effective support from the local authority, and from the diocese, since the last inspection. For example, senior leaders received support in drawing up a suitable action plan, following the school's last inspection. The local authority helped to improve the quality of the plan by encouraging the use of milestones, to help the governing body to check more easily whether the school's actions are on-track. Leaders have received good support from the local authority to help them to improve the school's policy and procedures to keep children safe, and in the swift brokering of an appropriate professional to carry out an external review of governance. The local authority and the diocese have also supported the brokering of links to another school, recognised for its excellent practice.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Rutland local authority and as below.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority (CfBT Education Trust)
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools (Diocesan Board of Education for the Diocese of Peterborough)