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Mr M Clutsom
Headteacher
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St Kew
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Dear Mr Clutsom

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Kew Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 January 2015, 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 September 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 success criteria in the school improvement plan so that they link precisely to improvements in pupils' achievements
- insert interim milestones to the plan so governors and the local authority can accurately check the success of planned actions to improve teaching and pupils' achievement.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, two governors and all teaching staff. A telephone call was conducted with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A number of other

documents were reviewed including the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, the headteacher's reports to the governing body, records of the school's monitoring activities and a range of pupils work. A short visit to every class was conducted with two older pupils.

Context

Since the last full inspection in September 2014 one teacher has left the school. A new mathematics leader has been appointed and the responsibility for leading English has been re-allocated to another member of staff.

Main findings

Senior leaders, staff and governors fully accepted the judgement of the last full inspection. Consequently, all staff are using the findings in their drive to make things better and clearly understand the part they play in securing improvements. This is shown by the way staff have been involved in revising the school improvement plan so it accurately matches the areas for development in the inspection report. Actions link well to the established monitoring cycle to check on the success of marking, planning and teaching. However, some success criteria to improve the quality of teaching in the plan need to link more precisely to the intended improvements in pupil outcomes. The addition of interim milestones will ensure that governors and the local authority are better supported to accurately check how improvements to teaching are raising pupils' achievement.

The initial set of 'non-negotiables' introduced shortly after the last full inspection, to raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements, have been further refined. This now means that pupils are clear of what is expected of them in the classroom and governors are clear of what they should be doing. Every three weeks teachers meet with the headteacher to review information about the performance of their pupils. This is supplemented well by monthly meetings between the headteacher and the Chair of governors. As a result, teachers and leaders are more accountable for their performance and governors better informed about any teachers not yet performing at the standard expected.

Training across the school federation is complemented well by external consultancy to support teachers on their journey of improvement. It is leading to improvements to teaching, planning and marking in all classes. The introduction of time for pupils to respond to teachers comments about their work is improving pupils' dialogue about their learning with adults and raising their achievement. A new approach to planning activities in lessons is meeting pupils' different abilities and interests more closely. Teachers are combining this approach carefully with a focus on problem solving in mathematics. Older pupils' work on display illustrates some good examples of using alternative methods to solve problems relating to the Fibonacci sequence when studying 'mathematics in nature'. Pupils reported how positively these new

approaches were motivating them in their learning. They recognise that teachers' marking is improving and in turn are taking more time and care in their responses to their teachers' comments.

Governors understand the sense of urgency and specific actions required in order to become a good school. Currently a small core of governors is playing a strong part in driving improvement. They are very active in direct monitoring activities to check on the progress of actions taken by school leaders. The Chair of the Governing Body has a very good understanding of pupils' achievement data including the performance of disadvantaged students. Monthly checks on the success of the school improvement plan help them to keep completely up-to-date with improvements to teaching, marking and planning. Governors recognise that the addition of regular milestones within the school improvement plan would help them check on the expected impact of work to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching more closely.

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 is providing adequate support for the school. Guidance on writing the school improvement plan has been well received and helped focus activities on the areas of development identified at the last full inspection. However some support, such as that brokered from a local school, is inappropriate due to the close proximity and historical relationship between schools. Other support has yet to be established. Visit notes, following a monitoring activity, at 17pages are too long and often repetitive in their content. This makes it difficult for governors to pull out key issues easily and plan the appropriate next step.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Light
Her Majesty's Inspector