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Sarah Chapman  
Headteacher  
St Catherine's CofE Primary School  
Moorland Road  
Launceston  
PL15 7HX

Dear Mrs Chapman

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Catherine's CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 19 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 May 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:

- increase the rate of progress for pupils in Key Stage 1 by:
  - setting clear expectations of what pupils will learn in each lesson, based on their different starting points
  - correcting any misconceptions during lessons
  - writing precise next steps in learning when marking pupils' work
  - checking that there are no gaps in the work expected to be covered in writing and mathematics during each academic year
- improve the leadership of Key Stage 1 so that the quality of teaching and learning, and pupils' progress, is consistently good
- ensure the scrutiny of children's books and lesson observations focus on the progress made by all pupils.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy head, chair of governors, Key Stage 1 leader and leaders of English and mathematics, and a telephone call was made to the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and website were evaluated and a range of documents examined, including the school's information on pupils' progress and attainment. In addition, a meeting was held with a group of pupils and lessons were observed in all but one class. The lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy head.

## **Main findings**

The headteacher and deputy head are improving teachers' skills in checking the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils, particularly those supported by the pupil premium funding and when pupils move to the next key stage. As a result, underachieving pupils are identified more quickly and given appropriate support.

Some teachers, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2, are using the progress data to match their lessons more closely to the pupils' learning needs. They check pupils' understanding during the lesson and ensure the work is at the right level of challenge, including for the more able pupils. For example, in a Year 5 literacy lesson involving a class debate, pupils made notes on their views either for or against the use of internet chatrooms. The most able pupils were challenged to write the conclusions from both points of view, and the teacher made sure that they knew how to do this. The marking of pupils' work includes comments about what they need to do next to improve it. As a result, pupils' achievement is above that typically expected by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and above average by the end of Key Stage 2.

The use of assessment is not so well developed in Key Stage 1, where lessons focus on the activities rather than on the learning. In one lesson, pupils were engaged in the exciting task of preparing a weather forecast to be filmed by their peers. However, it was not clear what precisely they were expected to learn from it. The marking of pupils' work does not always help them to know what they need to do to improve it. While pupils' achievement is above average in the Year 1 phonics test, it is slightly below national expectations in all areas by the end of Key Stage 1.

Pupils make less progress in mathematics and writing than in reading because there are gaps in their learning as they go through the school. Misconceptions are not always tackled in lessons. Senior and middle leaders are reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it is more interesting and that there are no longer any gaps in pupils' development. They have recently introduced a joined handwriting style from the

Early Years through to Year 6 and are aware of the need to ensure English grammar, punctuation and spelling are planned more explicitly across year groups.

Due to the more interesting curriculum and increased challenge in lessons, behaviour is improving. Pupils continue to feel safe in school and enjoy the friendly atmosphere. Their attendance is average.

Subject leaders are developing appropriate skills in monitoring pupils' progress through examination of data and pupils' books. However, they are not yet evaluating the information, or observing lessons, to inform areas for further improvement. They provide effective support for colleagues, for example in the teaching of phonics. The leadership of Key Stage 1 is not ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning leads to good progress for all pupils across this key stage.

Governance has improved well. Governors now know the questions to ask in holding the school to account for the progress of all pupils, including those supported by the pupil premium funding. Since its review in the summer term, the governing body has clarified its roles and responsibilities and attended relevant training. The training has enabled the governors to interpret published data on the school's performance, manage the headteacher's performance management, and monitor the use of the pupil premium funding. One of the governors has the specific role of monitoring the impact of the funding on pupils' progress and a statement about this is on the school's website. This is good practice, although it is too soon to see rapid improvement in the pupils' achievement.

Teachers and governors attended training on the role of the governing body. This has resulted in them working together more strategically, for example a presentation by the literacy leader on pupils' progress in phonics enabled the governors to understand the impact of spending on the commercial scheme used. The governors are pro-active in requesting concise information from the headteacher. They have established a group to monitor improvements on the school's post-inspection action plan and are challenging the school to increase the effect of lesson observations on improving the quality of teaching and learning. They are also researching how to raise parents' aspirations and engage them more in the work of the school.

The governors' action plan and school action plan are evaluated effectively against suitable 'milestones' towards the targets. The evaluation is helping the school to keep on track in tackling the areas for improvement. A good range of monitoring and evaluation strategies are used to inform progress. However, scrutiny of children's books and lesson observations are not yet focusing enough on the progress of all pupils.

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 making effective use of a range of good quality support that is tailored to its needs and is provided by the local authority. The support includes regular monitoring visits by a local leader of education, visits to her school to see outstanding practice and to moderate teachers' assessments, termly monitoring and reports by the local authority, detailed progress and attainment data provided by the local authority from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to the end of Key Stage 2, and the review of governance which included auditing governors' skills and a focus on the use of the pupil premium funding. The impact is evident in the improved use of assessment data.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater

**Her Majesty's Inspector**