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Mrs Jayne Peacock
Headteacher
Lynton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Market Street
Lynton
EX35 6AF

Dear Jayne Peacock

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lynton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 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:

- ensure that teachers quickly identify when pupils are finding the work too hard or too easy and adapt teaching to meet their needs
- ensure that governors set out a timetable of monitoring activities
- provide more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills and increase their fluency in calculation.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held a phone conversation with a representative of the local authority and met with you and subject leaders to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I met with members of the federated governing body earlier in the

week. The school improvement plan was evaluated. You and the subject leader for Literacy accompanied me on visits to lessons across all classes. During the lessons we evaluated the progress made by different groups of pupils. I also looked at pupils' books with you and the subject leaders for mathematics and literacy, to evaluate the quality of pupils' writing and mathematics work.

Context

Parracombe Church of England Primary, Kentisbury Primary School and Lynton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School are led by an executive headteacher and one governing body. The subject leaders of Literacy and Numeracy are responsible for developing teaching and learning in English and mathematics across each of the three schools. All three schools were judged as requiring improvement at their most recent inspections.

Lynton Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary pupils are taught in three separate classes for half of each school day. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 are taught together with similar aged pupils from Parracombe and Kentisbury. On a Monday morning all Year 5 and 6 pupils are taught at Parracombe and on a Friday morning at Lynton. Lynton pupils from Reception to Year 4 are taught throughout the week at the Lynton school site.

There have been no changes in staffing since the last inspection. There are currently two vacancies for governors. One governor has recently moved abroad and as a consequence there is currently a vacancy for a parent governor on the governing body.

Main findings

You are taking appropriate action to address the areas for improvement identified in the recent section 5 inspection. You have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have responded quickly to begin to drive improvement. You and other senior leaders have developed a single action plan for the three schools in the federation. The plan is a comprehensive document that clearly and appropriately sets out the course of action that will be taken to improve pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching across the three schools in the federation.

Our visits to lessons confirm that although variable, the quality of teaching is improving. Through a developing partnership with local schools, staff have observed high quality teaching and are starting to adapt new methods to improve their teaching. Staff are successfully sequencing lessons so that they build on pupils' previous learning, leading to improvements in the quality of pupils' writing. For instance, pupils are increasingly asked to edit and improve their writing over a number of consecutive days so that they produce a better quality final version. In

our visits to lessons we observed pupils in a Year 3 and 4 class confidently identifying nouns, verbs and adjectives and then composing good quality sentences accurately punctuated with speech marks. However, we observed that children's level of participation and attention varied in the Reception class. During our brief visit we noticed that the adult led activity did not meet the needs of all children and some began to lose attention and became distracted.

Together with subject leaders we looked at pupils' work in books from each class and confirmed that marking is more regular. We saw how marking after pupils have finished their work, provides pupils with helpful information on how to improve. However, weaknesses identified through teachers' marking are not followed up in lessons nor used effectively to plan work for the next school day that is set at the right level of difficulty. We identified that on too many occasions pupils are repeating mistakes in lessons unnecessarily because their misconceptions, including inaccurate spelling and punctuation are not always picked up quickly enough. Pupils' mathematics books confirm that pupils are introduced appropriately to new calculation methods. However, pupils are not regularly expected to use and apply these skills to solve problems or to choose the most efficient method of calculation. Here too, we noticed that some repeated misconceptions are not being picked up in lessons and as a result pupils' progress stalls.

Subject leaders are more frequently observing teaching and looking at pupils' work. As a result senior leaders are more systematically providing staff with appropriate training and support programmes. During the visit you and the Literacy subject leader observed separate lessons and we began to focus more closely on the progress made by different groups of pupils. I was encouraged to observe that your feedback to teachers included helpful feedback on the progress made by more able and disadvantaged pupils as well as the whole class. However, this is a brand new approach and staff have not previously been provided with clear information on those pupils that are making comparatively less progress.

Subject leaders are developing a clearer grasp of pupils' achievement and making effective use of this information to drive improvement. Through their increased monitoring they hold a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. English, mathematics and science leaders have produced plans that set out the actions and initiatives to develop pupils' achievement over the year. In addition, leaders in English and mathematics have reported to governors on progress in their subject. Governors are better placed to monitor the school's progress when reports provide information on the effectiveness of new initiatives rather than where they merely describe the completion of planned actions. For instance, the Literacy leader's report provided valuable information on the actions taken to improve pupils' achievement in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Governors have shown their commitment to the school through their supportive approach. They are keen to develop their roles and responsibilities but display a

thoughtful consideration that this process should not be detrimental to building professional relationships with staff. Minutes of governing body meetings indicate that by more frequently asking searching questions, governors are providing appropriate levels of challenge. The school's progress is monitored closely by a small group of governors who meet regularly with you. They check and record that planned actions have been completed on time but this provides an overly positive view of progress. This is because their evaluations are not yet sufficiently focused on the difference the actions have made to pupils' achievement. As yet governors have not set out a programme of monitoring activities that will provide first hand evidence of the effectiveness of the school's actions.

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 appropriate support for the school. Prior to the inspection the local authority had identified turbulence in the school's leadership and had responded appropriately to monitor the school more closely. A timely monitoring visit completed by local authority representatives gave an accurate account of the quality of teaching and learning across the schools. The information gathered was used appropriately by the local authority to commission and draw on the support of a local teaching school partnership.

Local schools have begun to provide a programme of support that is beginning to develop the quality of teaching. However, progress is hindered because it is not clear how support builds sequentially on previous coaching to ensure teachers improve their performance and progress towards key objectives.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield
Her Majesty's Inspector