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3 February 2015

Mrs Tracey Hailey
Executive Headteacher
Kentisbeare Church of England Primary School
Fore Street
Kentisbeare
Cullompton
Devon
EX15 2AD

Dear Mrs Hailey

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kentisbeare Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 February 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 October 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection, and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- strengthen the school improvement plan to ensure all leaders and governors understand their role in improving the school rapidly
- provide training for middle leaders to take a more effective role in leading their subjects
- urgently tackle inconsistencies in marking and feedback to improve the quality and quantity of pupils' work
- insist on high standards of presentation in pupils' work across the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, members of the governing body, the subject leader for mathematics and English, and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan with you and scrutinised a range of documents including governing body minutes, teachers' planning and information about pupils' progress. I joined you on a focused tour of the school to discuss improvements you are making and spoke with a group of pupils to seek their views on these improvements.

Context

There have been no staffing changes since your recent inspection.

Main findings

You have begun to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Staff share your vision to improve the school quickly. However, your actions are not having sufficient impact in driving improvement at the rapid pace needed to ensure the school becomes good. Your expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Although the staff are committed to making the necessary improvements, they are not sufficiently clear about what is expected of them. This is slowing the pace of improvement. You have rightly identified the expertise which exists within the federation and the local teaching school. However you have yet to use this good practice to develop the skills of your staff. This is limiting the school's capacity to improve.

You have focused on improving the teaching of mathematics to raise standards of achievement and progress in this subject. The subject leader has supported staff in improving their practice. He has led training to develop their subject knowledge, particularly in teaching problem solving. Opportunities to observe each other teaching mathematics is building teachers' confidence and leading to improvements in their teaching skills. However, teachers' planning and the work seen in pupils' books demonstrate that not all pupils are being sufficiently challenged to achieve well. This is particularly true of the most able pupils. Although the school's information shows pupils are making progress in mathematics, some are capable of achieving higher standards.

The school improvement plan focuses on the priorities identified at the last inspection. The actions you want to take are well-considered and appropriate. However, the role of your middle leaders in implementing these actions and checking their impact is not clear. They lack training in understanding and carrying out their role effectively. As a result, leaders are not rigorously checking that actions taken are being consistently implemented by all staff. For example, the revised marking and feedback policy is not being followed by all staff. Some teachers are

giving pupils opportunities to extend their learning by responding to questions and comments, but others are not. Consequently, marking and feedback do not always provide enough guidance and challenge. Work in books, especially in writing, is untidy and at times, poorly presented. Teachers accept this work without giving sufficient guidance to pupils to improve. As a result, too many pupils are making slower progress than they should.

Governors are committed to the school. Following the inspection judgement, they resolved to increase their level of involvement and challenge to improve the school quickly. They meet to check the progress and impact of the actions being taken by school leaders. Minutes of their meetings demonstrate that they are challenging and monitoring the school more sharply. Governors are now checking the impact of school leaders themselves and not just relying on information given to them by the headteacher. Therefore their capacity to support the school to improve is developing quickly. However, it is too early to see the impact of their work.

Ofsted will 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 good support from the local authority both before and following the inspection. The local authority adviser has an in-depth understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, he has supported you in monitoring the quality of teaching and identifying priorities for improvement. In addition, you have received support to improve achievement and progress in mathematics. Middle leaders attend training led by the local authority which is supporting them in carrying out their role more effectively. However, despite this on-going support over time, the pace of improvement is still too slow.

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

Catherine Leahy
Her Majesty's Inspector