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15 March 2015

Mrs Catherine Cox  
Headteacher  
Ilfracombe Church of England Junior School  
Princess Avenue  
Ilfracombe, EX34 9LW

Dear Mrs Cox

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ilfracombe Church of England Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 14 March 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure the school's action plan and termly reports evaluate the impact of the school's actions and initiatives in terms of pupils' achievement, especially for most able pupils and those supported by the pupil premium
- develop more effective use of assessment to ensure pupils are regularly challenged to think harder about key concepts and are provided with opportunities to develop their fluency, particularly in mathematics.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. The inspector conducted a learning walk with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, visiting each class in the school. The inspector viewed the

school's tracking of pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, senior leaders' termly impact reports and monitoring records.

### **Context**

Two members of staff have left since the inspection, an Assistant Headteacher and a classteacher. A member of the teaching staff has returned from maternity leave. Two governors have left the governing body during the academic year. The governing body is due to reconstitute in May 2015 and are considering reducing the composition of the governing body by two members.

### **Main findings**

Senior leaders have responded systematically and constructively to the findings of the section 5 inspection. The action plan clearly sets out the activities the school will take to address areas of weakness. The document provides a clear framework that is helping senior leaders and governors to monitor the progress made by the school. In response to advice from the local authority, the action plan has been adapted to include interim milestones against which progress is regularly measured and adapted. Detailed termly reports evaluate the impact of the school's work and are used effectively to set next steps. However, both the reports and action plan do not place enough emphasis on measuring impact in terms of pupils' achievement, especially for most able pupils and those supported by the pupil premium.

Senior leaders and governors are appropriately focussed on the key areas identified at the last inspection. Lesson observations and work scrutinies are shared by a range of middle and senior leaders providing staff with regular feedback. As a result, staff know what is expected of them and have developed a more consistent approach to marking and planning.

Pupils' progress, remains too variable, particularly in mathematics. Senior leaders have worked with external consultants to develop the teaching of mathematics. Whilst teachers' planning now regularly contains activities for different groups; in lessons too many pupils are not challenged to think harder about a concept or lack the understanding to complete the task successfully. In a number of classes, some groups of pupils struggle to complete tasks because they move on to new work before they fully understand the previous activity. Currently, some staff do not respond confidently and quickly to adapt the activity so that pupils are given additional time to consolidate their understanding.

Where achievement is more rapid, teachers' assessments of pupils' work are used more effectively to set activities that regularly challenge pupils to do their best. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson the teacher made effective use of their marking from work set the previous day. They provided more able pupils with complex problem solving activities from the very start of the lesson, ensuring they made progress throughout the lesson. Senior leaders recognise this as key to driving improvement and have placed an appropriate emphasis on developing more effective use of assessment across the school.

Members of the governing body have responded positively to a review of governance and are more actively monitoring the work of the school. Governors now regularly pose searching questions and are more confident in requesting information about the progress that pupils make. For example, a recent data presentation has left governors better placed to evaluate the impact of the school's actions on each year group and in different subject areas. Reorganisation of the committee structure, prompted by the review, has led to clearer delegation of roles and responsibilities. A separate committee now closely monitors the progress of the school's action plan. However, the majority of monitoring is currently completed by a few individual members of the governing body, limiting closer monitoring of subject areas and year groups.

Senior leaders are appropriately developing the school's tracking of pupils' progress in the light of national changes in assessment practice. Leaders are using this information to identify those pupils working below age appropriate levels and to provide support programmes. As the school moves from one tracking system to the other, governors display a sound understanding that the effectiveness of the school's actions in the short term is measured in pupils' progress from their attainment in Year 2 at their previous school.

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**

Local authority support following the review of governance has helped to clarify the governing body's roles and responsibilities. Through links with a local school, governors now recognise the level of information and data on pupils' progress they require to more closely monitor the school's progress. Visits from experienced headteachers have substantiated the school's view of the quality of teaching. Their work with middle and senior leaders is helping to identify the next steps in the school's journey.

Consultants have supported the school to introduce the new mathematics National Curriculum over the last three terms. Teachers have reorganised their planning to provide whole-class teaching. However, whilst teachers have enthusiastically adopted the new approach, this is not yet fully embedded across the school. As a result, pupils are not yet consistently building their understanding of mathematical concepts and developing their fluency in calculation.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**