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Mr A Scarrett
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Scarrett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 April 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 November 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 key recommendations taken from the recent review of governance are incorporated quickly into the school's improvement plan
- a timescale for evaluating the work of the school is identified within the school improvement plan and the impact of completed work is shared regularly with all staff and governors.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you, middle leaders, and members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the most recent inspection. I met with a representative from the local authority and a small group of pupil representatives to talk about their work. I also held a telephone conversation with a National Leader of Education. Together we carried out brief visits to lessons and reviewed pupils' work

in their books. Documents including school improvement action plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection one member of the teaching staff has resigned. A new teacher started in January 2015. Governors are in the process of restructuring the way they work.

Main findings

Following the inspection you have worked closely with senior leaders and governors to incorporate the recommendations of the inspection report into the school improvement plan. You have begun the process of empowering your senior and middle leaders to take more responsibility for improving pupils' achievement. Senior leaders are becoming more confident in tracking pupils' progress and achievement. As a result they are able to identify, and better provide for, the specific learning needs of pupils, especially the most able and pupils entitled to additional funding through the pupil premium. This performance tracking information is now regularly shared with governors. Following the inspection, all staff have been brought up-to-date with what the school needs to do to improve. The middle leaders I spoke with say they are developing a clearer understanding of the school's priorities for improvement and the part they need to play in the process.

You and your senior leaders have raised the expectations of teachers and become much more analytical of the school's performance data. This is allowing you to spot patterns and trends in pupils' achievement. Teachers better understand the progress pupils are making and identify where groups or individuals may need additional help. As a result, recent assessments show most pupils are beginning to make better progress in developing their reading, spelling and writing skills. For example, Year 6 pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and are on track to achieve their aspirational targets in this summer's assessment tests. Similarly, checks by senior leaders on the work to engage pupils more positively in lessons show a significant improvement in pupils' attitudes to learning and a drop in incidents of pupils' poor behaviour recorded in lessons. Other work has also been carried out to improve the quality of teachers' marking in order to provide pupils with clearer next steps on how to improve their work.

Pupils who met with me said the school is a much more respectful place following the inspection. Also, changes to the timing of breaks, lunch and assemblies have helped to create a more orderly and calm learning environment. Pupils appreciate the regular time they now get to review their work in books and respond to their teachers' comments using their special 'purple pens'. Older pupils were able to speak confidently about their targets and what they need to do next to improve their work. Pupils also agree 'bullying and rough play are things of the past' because the school has raised its expectations of how pupils should behave towards one another and

adults. For example, all adults are now addressed by their surnames and the school has brought in higher standards for pupils wearing school uniform. Pupils were unanimous that they feel safe in school at all times and that adults quickly deal with incidents of inappropriate behaviour when they do sometimes occur. Pupils said they appreciate the new play equipment such as the hula-hoops and other games made available at lunchtimes.

Governors have established a monitoring committee to regularly check on the work of the school. Governors say this allows them to gain a much clearer understanding of the work of the school and to hold you and your leadership team more effectively to account. Following a review of governance in February 2015, governors have introduced other ways to work more closely with teachers in order to gain first-hand experience of how teachers monitor the progress of pupils' learning. Times to check on the work and progress of the school are appropriately identified within the school improvement plan along with those responsible for carrying out these actions. However, the school improvement plan does not make clear how the impact of the school's work is to be shared with all staff and governors. Also, governors have yet to incorporate into the school improvement plan the key recommendations from their recent governance review.

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 has brokered a range of external support. This includes the regular involvement of a National Leader of Education to provide coaching support for the headteacher and subject expertise for teachers in English and mathematics. Governors have undergone an external review of governance.

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

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector