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Mrs Cathryn Benefer
Executive Headteacher
Bramfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Bridge Street
Bramfield
Halesworth
IP19 9HZ

Dear Mrs Benefer

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Bramfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1 May 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in January 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you and the head of school site, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a small group of pupils from Year 5 and Year 6. You took me on a tour of the school. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated.

Context

Having worked together collaboratively for 18 months, Bramfield became part of a formal federation with three other schools on 26 March 2015. As a result, the existing governing body has been disbanded and Bramfield is now governed by a joint body representing all four federation schools. Consequently, a new Chair of the

Governing Body has been appointed since the last inspection. Two other federation schools were inspected in the days preceding my visit.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The school's leaders and governors were disappointed by the outcome of the inspection in January. However, it is clear that the school has accepted the judgement and is committed to moving the school back to good or better at its next inspection.

The school's action plan includes a range of suitable actions. Timescales are clear, and milestones are in place to show intended progress over the coming year. Named people are responsible for individual actions. The plan shows how actions will be monitored and, where possible, it includes costings. The 'methods of evaluation' sheet provides an accessible list of suitable ways of assessing the school's progress.

Although its front page lists the key areas for improvement from the recent inspection, not all actions are addressed fully in the plan. The wording of some actions has been modified and interpreted and, as a result, some of the meaning has been lost. For example, although the action plan addresses the need to improve self-evaluation, the need for the school's leadership to become 'rigorously self-critical' has been lost.

The action plan includes milestones but these are not measurable, making it very difficult for governors to monitor progress towards achieving them effectively. Similarly, the plan lacks success criteria for its actions, making it impossible for governors to hold you fully to account.

Governors are aware that they need to be more effective in holding the school's leaders to account. Governors that met with me spoke convincingly about the new governing body and how it is becoming more effective in both supporting and challenging the school.

As a result of the federation, leadership is spread very thinly and governors are aware that this is something that needs to be considered sooner rather than later. Governors know that they need to think carefully about the structure that will provide the federation with the best possible leadership across all four schools.

The local authority's statement of action is compliant and includes a suitable range of support for the school. The plan relates directly to the key areas for improvement from the recent inspection and the local authority's role in supporting and challenging the school is clear.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk County Council and the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney
Her Majesty's Inspector