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Mrs Karen Bye
Advisory Headteacher
Holy Cross Church of England Primary School
Belmont Road
Uckfield
TN22 1BP

Dear Mrs Bye

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

Following my visit to your school on 5 June 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 January 2015. 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:

- develop the coaching programme offered to members of staff, for their direct work with pupils and as subject leaders, so that their skills and expectations of pupils grow further
- ensure that governors ask sharp and searching questions of the school, related to its key strategic priorities
- continue to improve the learning environment, inside and outside.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, members of staff and representatives of the governing body. I spoke by telephone with an officer of the local authority. We walked around the school together, visiting all classes at work. I looked briefly at

some pupils' work. I evaluated some significant documents, including school improvement plans, self-evaluation and minutes of meetings.

Context

Since the inspection, you have taken over as advisory headteacher.

Main findings

The school has improved well since the inspection. Under your clear leadership it is moving in the right direction across a wide range of areas. You have accurately identified what is going well and what needs to improve. This leads to robust and efficient actions to bring about necessary change. The school improvement plan is well organised and self-evaluation is accurate. You have made some appropriate changes to staffing and teaching groups, so that pupils receive teaching more closely targeted to their needs.

Some of the changes you have made quickly have provided momentum for the improvement journey still ahead. For example, successful actions have improved pupils' handwriting, presentation and increased their pride in their work. Homework challenges provide interesting and stimulating activities which are shared with parents. The school enters successfully a greater number of local sporting competitions which builds pupils' confidence. Members of staff are now better able to contribute to, as well as learn from, joint events with staff from other schools.

Teachers and teaching assistants now receive helpful coaching and training. This is improving their committed practice when working with pupils. When we visited lessons, I could see that teachers' expectations of pupils have risen. We saw pupils consistently well engaged in worthwhile learning tasks. Staff and pupils had good relationships. There is more to do, however, to raise expectations further. For example, in Year 2, pupils' writing is improving but is not yet as good as it should be.

Some teachers have begun to develop their roles as leaders. The deputy headteacher has a clear job description and is extending her work. A new special educational needs co-ordinator has recently been appointed. Other teachers are leading different subjects. These are important roles, which should enable pupils to enjoy an increasingly rich and challenging curriculum. You are sensibly planning to include building leadership skills in the coaching and training for staff.

You have improved the effectiveness of pupil premium expenditure. The size of some teaching groups has been reduced and pupils have enjoyed worthwhile visits out of school. Generally, disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their classmates.

The school has a large building and extensive grounds. Potentially, these are a wonderful environment for learning. You have already made a number of successful improvements. The school has many functional and attractive rooms and spaces in which pupils can enjoy their learning. However, there is more to do to utilise the site fully to improve the richness of the curriculum.

The Chair of Governors leads the governing body well. Governors know the school well and care for it deeply. Their decisions about the school's future direction and how it should be led are shrewd and carefully considered. Governors have appropriately addressed the recommendations of a recent review of their work. Rightly, they are changing the organisation of the governing body so that it can undertake better its rightful strategic role, including with fewer, better focused, meetings. Governors are usefully developing the way they ask questions of senior staff. They recognise that these questions are not always sufficiently challenging. Your guidance is helpful to them.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has been supporting the school, successfully helping it to manage necessary change, for many months. Your current involvement in the school is a key part of this support. Local authority officers are effectively helping the school to do more by itself by building greater leadership capacity. The diocese also constructively helps the school to consider its future organisation.

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

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector