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4 December 2015

Mrs Marion Link  
Headteacher  
Swaffham Church of England CofE VC Infant and Nursery School  
White Cross Road  
Swaffham  
Norfolk  
PE37 7RF

Dear Mrs Link

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Swaffham Church of England CofE VC Infant and Nursery School**

Following my visit to your school on 25 November 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the section 5 inspection in order to become a good school. The school should continue to take action to:

- improve the overall attendance of all pupils by tackling the very poor attendance of a small number of persistent absentees
- regularly track the improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring the detailed monitor schedule is followed and middle leaders are supported to make accurate observations that improve outcomes
- employ the strengths of the new, experienced governors and local authority intervention officer to support the full governing body to

embed the necessary skills to fully support and challenge senior leaders.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the governing body and a representative of the local authority. We reviewed your self-evaluation and the school improvement plan and linked action plans and assessment results for the autumn term 2015. We discussed the pupil outcomes for 2014/15 and the targets for 2015/16. We visited all classrooms as part of an extended tour of the school, looking at examples of pupils' work as we went. We discussed pupil attendance and I reviewed your single central record and safeguarding arrangements.

## **Context**

Since my previous visit, two members of your teaching staff have taken maternity leave, including your assistant headteacher. You have restructured the class arrangements in Key Stage 1 and moved from five mixed-age classes to four single year group classes. You have appointed a reception teacher.

An improvement board has been established to support improvements in the governing body; this is being chaired by your local authority intervention officer.

## **Main findings**

Governors have strengthened through training and the appointment of new, experienced governors and are now equipped to support the school more effectively. They have developed an action plan following the results of the external review of governance. This plan has a clear description of successful outcomes and milestone indicators, to demonstrate interim progress, and covers all of the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted. It is reviewed each month by the school improvement board and every objective is discussed, with a 'red, amber, green' rating given to each objective. A strategic plan has been created to schedule tasks and duties throughout the year. This plan is being used to ensure that each meeting results in governors having a clear picture of school performance. They also regularly challenge senior leaders and seek clarification and confirmation on all aspects of school life.

The recently published pupil performance data indicate a three-year trend of improvement and this is predicted to continue to improve in the current year. Assessments for the autumn term support the school targets, which exceed current national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of this academic year. Practice in classrooms seen during our tour fully supports the improvement in pupils' performance. The new curriculum and revised teaching style provides all pupils with a good level of challenge and this is evidenced in their workbooks. Improvements in writing are of particular note and pupils describe how

the newly introduced learning grids help them to demonstrate their strengths and then provide new opportunities to improve.

You have recognised the challenges children face when entering your school and have been proactive in targeting their learning opportunities to support these challenges. You have worked with other professionals, feeder settings, local schools and the local authority to verify your assessment of children who start at your school and to support your judgements on pupils' performance at every stage of Key Stage 1. Children in the early years make strong progress and, on average, leave the setting having achieved a good level of development.

You have established a robust monitoring system to track the quality of teaching and learning. A combination of learning walks, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' books provides all teachers with a clear understanding of their strengths and the areas they need to develop. Plans to develop a file of pupils' work, providing examples of performance indicators for 'exceeding and greater depth', will further enhance teachers' ability to create challenge. Your performance management systems support effective teaching, learning and assessment and you have tackled any underperformance. The introduction of the new teaching and learning approach in September 2015 has galvanised staff and they present as more reflective, stronger practitioners.

You are very proactive in tackling poor attendance and dramatic improvements in the overall attendance percentage are hindered by a very small group of families with exceptionally poor attendance. You have instigated fixed-penalty notices and coupled this with support from your attendance officer and the involvement of outside agencies. Overall school attendance is improving very slightly but remains too low.

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 provided effective support to the school to develop the role of governors and support them to monitor the progress of pupils. They have also supported the involvement of a systems leader to aid the introduction of a more creative and challenging curriculum. The school is part of the Norfolk 'Better to Best' programme and accesses the support available. The local authority school intervention officer will continue to support the school throughout the academic year. Involvement of the diocese has remained limited, but the Christian ethos of the school is evident and there is Christian representation on the governing body.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah Pargeter  
**Ofsted Inspector**