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Mr Christopher Dale
Headteacher
St Nicholas Church of England (Controlled) Primary School
Fairfield Road
New Romney
Kent
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Dear Mr Dale

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of St Nicholas Church of England (Controlled) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 April 2016, 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 November 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 have serious weaknesses.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss your evaluation of the school's improvement. I made brief visits to all the classrooms with you and looked at a sample of pupils' work from key stages 1 and 2. We discussed pupils' current achievement. I held meetings with a representative of the local authority, the chair of the interim executive board and another governor, and the key stage 1 and 2 leaders. I examined the local authority's statement of action, your evaluation of the school's performance, the school's main improvement plan, notes from your meetings with teachers about pupils' progress, and the school's records of recruitment checks on staff.

Context

One teacher has left the school since the inspection and one has joined.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Your ambitious leadership has continued since the section 5 inspection. The warm welcome I received and the school's calm and purposeful atmosphere reflect the high standards for behaviour and courtesy which you have established. As a result, all the adults and pupils in school are now able to work throughout the day without interruption.

After a period of high staff turnover and staff absence, you have secured a stable staff team who share your urgency and determination to improve the school. You are taking effective steps to develop the skills of other leaders in the school to increase their influence on teaching and pupils' outcomes. You are right to recognise that some leaders' capacity is stretched, because they have a number of responsibilities in different areas where significant improvement is needed.

You have established firm systems to hold teachers to account for their pupils' achievement. These include regular checks on teaching and pupils' work, and discussions with teachers about progress in their class. You ensure that all staff receive the training and support they need, individually and in year group teams. These high levels of challenge and support are enabling steady improvement in teaching.

You have ensured teachers improve the way they assess and record pupils' achievement. Leaders and teachers are using this information increasingly well to check pupils' progress and when they plan for pupils' next steps in learning.

You have devised a suitable plan, which is steering the work of leaders and staff to improve the school successfully. The plan addresses all the areas for improvement identified by the section 5 inspection, allocates clear responsibilities to staff and governors, includes ambitious timescales and is linked well to the local authority's statement of action.

The interim executive board remains a significant strength. Governors know the school well. They are holding you firmly to account to secure swift and sustainable improvement. Governors are determined to ensure the forthcoming transition to academy status does not interrupt the school's rapid improvement.

The local authority has provided effective support to improve teaching in key stages 1 and 2. However, advisers have lacked urgency in supporting the school to review provision and outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the director of children's services for Kent, and the Diocese of Canterbury. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton
Her Majesty's Inspector