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Mrs Jinnie Nichols
Bulmer St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Church Road
Bulmer
Sudbury
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Dear Mrs Nichols

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bulmer St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 June 2017, 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 May 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in May 2016, 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 recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that good progress is more evident in all year groups and across a wide curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher and the deputy headteacher of the school with which the school is federated. I spoke by telephone to a representative of the local authority. Together, we visited each classroom to see pupils' learning and we looked at examples of pupils' books. I

checked the school's single central record to check that safeguarding requirements were met.

Context

Since the first inspection monitoring inspection, the school has federated with St Giles' Church of England Primary School, with the headteacher of that school becoming the executive headteacher of both schools. This happened at the start of this term, so innovations are very recent.

Main findings

You took full responsibility for the school at the start of this term, although you had been providing support for some time before that. As a result you were well placed to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses very quickly. You and your deputy headteacher have had a swift and positive impact on improving pupil outcomes. The quantity and quality of pupils' work in their books has improved dramatically this term. It is apparent that the quality of teaching and learning, especially in Years 3 and 4, has improved radically. Staffing for this class is more stable than it has been for some time.

The downward trend in pupils' outcomes has been reversed this year. Externally moderated end of key stage test results show that, due to a lot of effective work in a short period of time, pupils have exceeded what was expected of them at the time of the previous visit. Despite this, you recognise that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects is not where it should be because of the legacy of poor provision.

You have imported successful systems and policies from your other school such as approaches to assessment and these are having a positive impact on pupils' progress. The executive deputy headteacher is providing very helpful coaching through her responses to the monitoring of teachers' planning and checking of pupils' books. As a result of what we saw together, you concluded that the improved planning may not be translating into what actually happens in lessons and so you are going to increase your checking of this. You have concluded that some teachers are not best matched to the age groups they are teaching and you are rectifying this from September.

Teachers are raising their expectations and recognising what pupils are capable of by seeing work from other schools. Opportunities to benefit from economies of scale are beginning to be seized. For example, this week pupils from Years 3 and 4 joined with pupils from your other school to visit Layer Marney Tower. This motivated and inspired pupils to write at length about their experience. You are chair of the local cluster of schools and this provides additional opportunities for teachers from your small school to see a range of other pupils' work.

You have taken decisive action to resolve the most urgent staffing challenges. You have a clear plan to ensure that, as a matter of urgency, pupils across the school make good progress and that the school improves.

External support

The local authority has provided support through bringing you and the school together. This has been an important move in sustaining the school's viability. An improvement board comprising you, governors and a representative of the local authority continues to monitor and challenge the school's improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Chelmsford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector