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Steven Fisher  
Clehonger CofE Primary School  
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Herefordshire  
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Dear Mr Fisher

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Clehonger CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 14 September 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 and your senior leaders 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 February 2017. 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 in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- make sure that leaders accurately evaluate the school's performance and use the information to plan specific and timed actions against which progress can be measured
- make sure that there is sufficient focus on providing an appropriate level of challenge for the most able pupils in order to accelerate their progress and enable them to achieve at the higher standards.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the head of school, the deputy head of school, five members of staff and four members of the governing body. I

also held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority. Discussions focused on the actions taken by leaders since the last inspection and their impact on pupils' achievements. I evaluated the school's action plans and a range of other documents including the school's self-evaluation statement, the school improvement plan, minutes of governors' meetings and the single central record. Together with a member of the senior leadership team, I undertook short visits to all classrooms to observe pupils' learning. I spoke informally to some pupils about their learning.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection in February 2017, there have been a number of changes of staff. The head of school left and a new head of school took up post at the start of the summer term. The new head of school is also head of another local primary school and splits her time equally between the two sites. A deputy headteacher, known as the deputy head of school, took up post at the start of September 2017. There have also been changes to the teaching staff, with a teacher and a teaching assistant leaving at the end of the summer term. A new chair of the governing body was appointed at the start of the summer term.

## **Main findings**

After a period of instability, you have established a new school leadership team which, despite only being in place for a short period of time, is having a tangible and positive influence in the school. Both governors and staff identify a number of constructive changes that have taken place. For example, the new arrangements for the end of the school day have resulted in a calmer atmosphere and made teaching staff more accessible to parents. Evidence gathered during the brief visits I made to lessons indicates positive relationships between adults and pupils, and pupils who are engaged in their learning and keen to ask questions.

While it is clear that you and your leadership team have a good understanding of the priorities the school needs to address, your school action plans are currently not fit for purpose. They do not accurately reflect the actions being taken to raise standards. In addition, they do not include enough information to allow governors to monitor the effectiveness of the actions or to provide effective challenge. Similarly, your self-evaluation documentation does not always accurately reflect the school's current strengths and areas for development.

Since the section 5 inspection, some governors have received training to help them better understand school data and they are now more confident in holding leaders to account for pupils' outcomes. Governors are aware that they all need to complete additional training to understand the new assessment information. The recommended review of governance is under way and will be completed in the next few weeks. During this inspection, governors told me that they will develop an action plan following the review.

You and your leadership team are rightly focusing on improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school, including in the early years. Together, you have set clear expectations for staff and have introduced a comprehensive programme for raising standards. This includes changes to the organisation of the school day. As a result, there is an increase in teaching time. In addition, leaders' weekly monitoring of teaching plans and half-termly reviews of pupils' progress are helping staff to deliver lessons that improve pupils' learning effectively. You are also providing staff with more opportunities to work with colleagues from other schools in order to compare the standards of pupils' work. School staff feel that you listen to their views. They expressed faith in you and your leadership team's approach, saying that you make decisions for the benefit of the pupils.

In order to allow staff to focus on improving the quality of their teaching, your head of school and deputy head of school are currently taking the lead on most areas within the school, including the early years. You have appointed a new mathematics subject leader who is undergoing a period of training before taking on the responsibility for this area.

In addition to improving the quality of teaching for all, teachers are now clearer on their responsibilities for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and work has begun to help teaching staff address the needs of individual pupils more effectively. There is an increased focus on addressing the needs of vulnerable pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, but this is not yet reflected in improved pupils' outcomes. Plans to support your most-able pupils, and routinely provide them with a sufficient level of challenge to accelerate their progress, are not yet sufficiently developed.

A simplified behaviour policy, which rewards positive behaviour, is now in place. You involved both staff and pupils in the development of this policy. The impact, commented upon by staff and leaders, is a more positive atmosphere in all classrooms and fewer negative behaviour incidents, particularly during lunchtimes.

The provisional information about pupils' outcomes in 2017 is similar to outcomes achieved in 2016. These results are broadly in line with those seen nationally with the exception of key stage 2. Results at the end of key stage 2 show underperformance in both the amount of progress pupils made from the end of key stage 1 and the proportion of pupils attaining the standard expected for their age. You and your school leaders have reviewed the school's assessment and tracking system and provided training for teachers on how to use the system. You are rightly focusing on establishing reliable baseline information for all pupils at the start of this academic year so that you can be confident about the accuracy of data within the system.

In order to support the progress of your current pupils, you and school governors have created two, smaller, single-age classes in Years 5 and 6. You have also

changed the way in which phonics teaching is organised so that sessions focus clearly on the pupils' needs. In the early years, you are focusing on developing children's independence. You have reorganised the learning environment to support this. You are aware that there is more to do to strengthen links between the Nursery and Reception classes.

Mathematics remains a key area for development. Staff have received some training and they are starting to use a wider range of approaches when teaching new mathematical concepts. For example, they have begun to encourage pupils to use more practical equipment and support problem-solving by using real-life data and contexts. However, these developments are at an early stage and you are aware of the need to provide more training and in-class support for staff in order to further improve the quality of mathematics teaching.

Your head of school has introduced a new topic-based curriculum, which pupils and staff are enjoying. Each topic is based around answering a 'big question' and different aspects of the curriculum link into this. You are using this approach to raise expectations about the standard of presentation across all pupils' work.

You and your head of school introduced some of these changes during the summer term, while others have only been in place for two weeks. As a result, it is too soon to be able to comment on the impact that many of these actions are having on pupils' progress and outcomes.

### **External support**

Kingstone Academy Trust provides the majority of external support to the school, mostly through the provision of your time and that of the head of school. While you had some links with Clehonger Primary prior to the recent section 5 inspection, your involvement has increased considerably since then. You and the senior leaders are now leading the changes within school. Together, your input focuses on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards for all pupils. While many developments are in their early stages, there are indications that these are starting to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

Representatives of the local authority meet with you and governors termly to monitor progress. They hold you to account effectively. They have also provided effective support for governors and the early years team. Last academic year, the local authority brokered support for you from a local teaching school. This focused on developing the teaching of mathematics. This input was less effective and did not have an impact on your outcomes in 2017. You are looking to secure further external support for mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Crooks  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**