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29 November 2018

Mrs Fay White  
Interim Executive Headteacher  
Bream Church of England Primary School  
High Street  
Bream  
Lydney  
Gloucestershire  
GL15 6JW

Dear Mrs White

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bream Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 15 November 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the most recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- raise teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
- improve pupils' progress in reading and writing throughout the school
- implement the new improvement plan based on the now accurate evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning
- urgently act on the recommendations of the recent review of governance, particularly that governors should receive training on interpretation of information about the performance of the school
- find a sustainable solution to secure the long-term leadership of the school.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection I held meetings with you, your two deputy headteachers and the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I met with a representative of the local authority. I evaluated a range of documentation, including the school's plans for improvement, minutes of governing body meetings, reviews of the school by the local authority and an external review of governance. I met with pupils from the school council. I observed learning in a range of lessons together with senior leaders. I talked with pupils about their school and looked at examples of their work to gain a view of teaching over time.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership of the school. Following a short period when the then headteacher shared the headship role with one of the deputy headteachers, the headteacher left the school in September 2018. Governors, with the help of the local authority, secured temporary leadership for the school by appointing an interim executive headteacher from October 2018.

## **Main findings**

Pupils' attainment has declined steadily in the two years since the previous inspection. Too little has been done to deal with the weaknesses in teaching that have caused this decline in standards. Senior leaders have been overgenerous in their evaluations of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, they have not held teachers to account effectively for the quality of their work.

Many of the features of teaching identified in the previous inspection report as areas for improvement remain today. Teaching is not based on an accurate understanding of what pupils already know, understand and can do. Too often, teachers give pupils work that does not stretch them. As a result, some pupils become bored and lose concentration.

Your appointment as interim executive headteacher marks a watershed moment for the leadership of the school. You have used the five weeks since your arrival at the school wisely. You have introduced new assessments for pupils that provide accurate information about their knowledge and understanding. Your initial evaluations of the school's work are sharp and incisive. You have worked with senior leaders and the local authority to develop a new improvement plan for the school that is based on these evaluations.

You have quickly established a new system for managing the performance of staff. Staff welcome the expert feedback and advice they are now receiving. This is helping them to identify their training needs. In the past, too few professional development opportunities were made available for staff. You and your senior team

are beginning to change this. You have made arrangements for teachers to see good practice at other schools and you intend to bring experts into the school to provide advice to teachers. However, this training, and your other actions, have not yet had time to make a significant difference to the quality of teaching experienced by pupils.

Key stage 2 pupils' progress in writing was below the national average in 2018. The leader for English has identified a weakness in teachers' planning. She is introducing changes to the way that teachers sequence learning activities so that pupils' writing becomes more imaginative and extensive. However, these changes are yet to become fully established and so pupils' progress in writing remains weak. Pupils' handwriting is not well developed. This is because, in the past, senior leaders did not establish a coherent policy for teaching handwriting. Teachers in key stage 1 have not had clear expectations about how pupils should grip their pencils and so pupils' handwriting has been held back. Teachers are now taking a more consistent approach to handwriting, but many pupils' letter formation is still erratic in size and spacing.

Senior leaders introduced a new spelling policy at the start of this academic year. This has had a positive effect on pupils' spelling. Some pupils, particularly in key stage 1, still struggle to spell common words correctly. Nevertheless, there is evidence that most pupils' spelling accuracy has improved.

You understand the importance of urgently improving pupils' reading. Pupils' progress in reading was weak in 2017 and 2018. You and your senior leaders are changing the way teachers implement this part of the curriculum. You are now allocating more time and resources to this vital area. Teachers appreciate the way you have included them in discussions about these changes.

Senior leaders have had some success in improving pupils' progress in mathematics, particularly in key stage 1. Since the previous inspection, the leader for mathematics has introduced new methods of teaching. She has ensured that teachers are aware of the raised standards expected of pupils in each year group. Most teachers have responded positively to this, although some teaching still does not challenge the most able pupils sufficiently.

Teaching in the Reception class develops pupils' early reading skills well. Senior leaders understand the reasons why many children who finished the Reception Year in 2018 did not do well. However, inspection evidence indicates that current children are making good progress. For example, they accurately recognise letters and the sounds they represent. The support that teaching assistants provide for this class is effective and contributes well to children's learning and development.

Governors did not challenge the headteacher effectively in the period after the previous inspection. They did not have a sufficient understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Consequently, they did not pay enough attention to setting the

strategic direction of the school and were too accepting of the headteacher's overgenerous evaluation of the quality of teaching. The governing body has accepted the findings of the recent hard-hitting external review of its work. The chair of the governing body is determined to improve its effectiveness and so improve the quality of education pupils receive. She is working closely with the local authority to consider how the leadership and staffing structure of this small school can be made more sustainable for the future.

### **External support**

The local authority began its most recent period of support for the school in April 2018. Local authority officers set up a 'project group' to monitor and support the school. During the summer term, the local authority performance adviser correctly identified key weaknesses in teaching and learning and the leadership of the school. She successfully brokered support for senior staff from mentors in other schools and instigated a review of governance.

The local authority is providing effective training for the governing body. Consequently, governors' skills and understanding are improving. They now have a much better understanding of their role and the expectations that they should have of senior leaders.

Following the resignation of the headteacher in September 2018, the local authority was pivotal in recruiting you, a suitably skilled and experienced headteacher from a local school in Coalway. You are acting as the executive headteacher for both schools for a period of one year. In a short period of time, you have brought stability to the school. Staff feel well led and well supported. They are growing in confidence and they are hopeful for the future.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Williams  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**