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Stephen Morton
Executive Head of School
Buckland St Mary Church of England Primary School
Buckland St Mary
Chard
Somerset
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Dear Mr Morton

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Buckland St Mary Church of England Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 15 December 2022, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, trustees and governors the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, met with staff, met with a group of pupils, looked at pupils' work and scrutinised curriculum and school improvement planning. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Buckland St Mary Church of England Primary School continues to require improvement. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- develop the use of assessment so that teachers know accurately how well pupils have learned the curriculum
- continue to build leaders' skills in and knowledge of effective curriculum design.

Main findings

There have been several staff changes since the previous inspection. Two of the three class teachers are new to post. The head of school leads two schools in the trust.

Leaders have secured some improvements to the quality of education since the previous inspection. For example, curriculum planning is now more detailed and considers what knowledge pupils need to learn and how this builds in complexity over time. There is also appropriate training and support in place to ensure the high standard of phonics teaching is maintained. Leaders have addressed the deficits in the early years curriculum. The curriculum is now well sequenced and allows children to build on the knowledge they have learned. Children are better prepared for Year 1.

The progress that pupils make through the curriculum is being tracked more carefully. Where this is done well, teachers use this to inform pupils' next steps in learning. This supports pupils to speak with greater confidence about the subject knowledge they have gained. However, this is not yet securely in place for all subjects, particularly the foundation subjects. Leaders have also identified mathematics as an area of focus, following the most recent outcomes in national tests. The curriculum has been adapted to address the areas that pupils are less secure in.

There is a comprehensive programme of professional development in place for staff. The trust provides opportunities for staff to work with colleagues from other schools. This is helping to develop and share subject expertise. Leaders have ensured that quality assurance of the curriculum is more regular and purposeful. However, some subject leaders lack an in-depth understanding of what makes an effective curriculum. Senior leaders recognise this and are providing further support and guidance to upskill new leaders quickly.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Redstart Learning Partnership multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Kelly Olive
His Majesty's Inspector