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Mrs Siobhan Rouse
Headteacher
St Philip's Church of England Aided Primary School
2 Vinery Way
Cambridge
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Dear Mrs Rouse

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St Philip's CofE Aided Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 21 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, three representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. In addition, the headteacher conducted HMI on a visit to each of the classrooms to observe pupils' learning.

Context

There have been no significant changes in the school's context since the last inspection.

Main findings

Despite some disappointment at the outcome of the last inspection, senior leaders and governors have responded with suitable determination to address the recommendations in the report. A detailed plan has been drawn up, and a number of changes have immediately been implemented, and the impact of some of the initial actions has already been reviewed. For example, the concerted drive to improve pupils' handwriting has encouraged pupils to write more fluently and confidently,

and the sharper focus of teachers' marking means that pupils are clearer about how they can improve their work. These strategies have not only improved the quality of pupils' work, particularly in literacy, but have encouraged the pupils to reflect on their learning and progress so that they take greater pride in their own achievement.

Partnership links with senior leaders and staff at The Spinney Primary School have been particularly helpful in raising teachers' expectations and encouraging discussion of different approaches to teaching and learning. Teachers have been quick to adopt and adapt ideas gleaned from their visits to the partner school, and have sensibly moderated their assessments of pupils' work and progress alongside senior leaders from the partner school.

The governing body is taking suitable steps to strengthen its impact and effectiveness. Governors understand the need to balance the support that they provide, while also increasing their level of challenge. Training provided by the local authority has been well received, and has given governors greater confidence to ask probing questions. Governors understand their monitoring role and have planned more regular visits, but their programme of monitoring needs to be more comprehensively coordinated to check progress against each aspect of the school's action plan.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommends that further action is taken to clarify how the impact of planned actions will be monitored and evaluated by ensuring that:

- governors know how and when they are going to make their checks
- senior leaders focus sharply on pupils' learning and progress when evaluating the impact of their work, including during lesson observations.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school has received additional support from the local authority for some time, although this has been stepped up since the last inspection. This guidance, including that provided by literacy and numeracy consultants, is well-judged and of good quality. Partnership arrangements with a local school are also proving effective.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire and the Diocese of Ely.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker
Her Majesty's Inspector