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11 June 2013

Jenny Overs
Headteacher
St Mary's CofE VA Primary School
Wintringham Road
St Neots
PE19 1NX

Dear Mrs Overs

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's CofE VA Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, pupils, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated and two lessons observed.

Context

There have been no changes in teaching staff since the section 5 inspection.

Main findings

Since the section 5 inspection the school has improved its monitoring of the progress of different groups of pupils in each year group. This data shows that all children continue to make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Through Key Stage 1 pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics, but progress is not as good in writing. The school has plans in place to improve this. Progress in Key

Stage 2 varies from one year group to the next. The strongest progress is in Year 4 and 5 where teaching is consistently good. The school has effective plans in place to improve progress in Years 3 and 6, including each pupil knowing what they need to do to get to the next level. A number of pupils move to this school at different times during the school year. The school is developing a way to find out about their individual needs and help them to settle as quickly as possible.

In the two lesson observations carried out, it was clear that teachers have had a lot of training on how to teach a good lesson. It was not as clear that they understood what good learning looks like or how to plan activities with this in mind. Although pupils' general behaviour in lessons is good, they do not concentrate as well as they could because the teacher does not always explain clearly enough the reasons for learning.

The governors are fully involved in school improvement and helped write the action plan. They visit the school frequently and continue to ask searching questions about pupils' progress.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to make sure that:

- all teachers understand precisely what good learning looks like in every year group
- teachers explain learning activities to pupils so that they understand the purpose of the activity and how this will help them develop skills they need.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school is drawing well on the external support offered by the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector