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Mrs K Rawling
Headteacher
Holy Trinity CofE VC Primary School and Nursery Unit
Cross Road
Weymouth
DT4 9QX

Dear Mrs Rawling

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Trinity CofE VC Primary School and Nursery Unit

Following my visit to your school on 13 January 2014, 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 November 2013. 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. The school should take further action to:

- review the performance objectives for the new phase leaders so they reflect the responsibilities for improving teaching and raising standards
- ensure that the action plan sets out how and when leaders and governors will check how well the school is tackling the areas for improvement
- revise the criteria and 'milestones' for judging success outlined in the action plan so that they show incremental improvement towards good achievement
- make good use of the Ofsted surveys for governance, English and mathematics including the associated professional development materials available on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, school staff, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I observed a lesson to teach letters and sounds, (phonics), visited three other lessons briefly and spoke with pupils. The school's action plan was evaluated alongside other documents including information about the outcomes of monitoring activities.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, two teachers have left the school. One teacher has returned from maternity leave to job-share with a newly appointed teacher. An assistant headteacher has been appointed and new phase leader roles have been allocated internally. Two governors have left the governing body and been replaced.

Main findings

Both you and the governing body have been decisive in implementing a more effective structure for leading the school. The new arrangements are better matched for a large-size school because the leadership responsibilities are shared more widely among the staff. The teaching assistants and subject leader that met with me understand clearly that the expectations of them have increased. This is evident in the way that teaching assistants track how well pupils are doing in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of their support. Rightly, you expect the pace of improvement to quicken as a result of the new structure. However, you have not reviewed the performance objectives for the phase leaders to ensure they focus on improving teaching and pupils' achievement across each phase. I identified an outstanding primary school of a similar size so that you may establish a link.

The governing body is well aware of the actions being taken because it is better informed than was the case previously. A prompt audit of the skills of its members has identified specific skills that would strengthen governance in the school. However, governors have not considered the findings of the Ofsted survey of effective governance which would support further improvement. The governing body draws effectively on the considerable expertise of members to hold the school to account. For example, governors check the school's progress towards tackling the key issues more easily because they have ensured that interim objectives are set out in the action plan. The actions align closely with the key areas for development, but the plan lacks detailed arrangements that set out how and when progress will be checked. The criteria and 'milestones' used for judging success do not reflect that for good achievement.

You have swiftly introduced a programme for individual teachers to share strengths and address development points, but it is too early to gauge the difference that it is

making. Other improvements are more evident such as the reorganisation of reading books and a stronger focus on teaching pupils to decode so-called nonsense words. Teaching assistants have a better understanding of how well pupils are doing which enables them to provide good support for pupils that needed extra help when learning phonics. The new arrangements for teaching mathematics are welcomed by the lower-attaining pupils. The work provides a greater level of challenge and the smaller classes enable individuals to receive more attention, when necessary. However, pupils' written work is not always marked promptly so they do not get the full benefit from their earlier work. Teachers do not routinely expect pupils to decide how they will approach mathematical problems as indicated by the inappropriate use of worksheets in some books. Subject leaders are not familiar with the surveys and professional development materials for English and mathematics that are available on the Ofsted website.

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 local authority's support did not start promptly enough to prevent the school from being judged to require improvement. The local authority monitors the school's progress closely and the training it has provided makes a positive difference to teaching. Leaders are well supported by an outstanding local secondary school, brokered by the local authority. This support has been instrumental in the school adopting a more effective leadership structure. The school's leaders act swiftly on the advice given. For example, they have implemented a more rigorous system to check on standards and teaching following a visit to an academy.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector