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7 March 2014

Mrs Lorna Brittain  
Headteacher  
Sheering Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
The Street  
Sheering  
Bishop's Stortford  
CM22 7LU

Dear Mrs Brittain

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sheering Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2014. 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:

- ensure that your completed improvement plan includes more regular points for measuring progress so that leaders know whether they are on track to meet their targets
- set up links with schools which have faced similar challenging circumstances and which have made the journey to good
- ensure that advice offered by different bodies is consistent in order to support rapid improvement.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I held meetings with you, three members of the governing body, eight pupils from Key Stage 2 and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan. I visited every class, accompanied by you, to look at the quality of teaching and pupils' books.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection there have been no contextual changes to the school.

## **Main findings**

Your action plan sets out clearly how you aim to tackle the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. However, while it is clear how leaders and governors will monitor the effectiveness of your planned actions, it is not clear how often you will check on the progress being made towards achieving your targets. It is also important to record the impact of your actions on an on-going basis. You have received conflicting guidance on how to complete your action plan from different parties, which has not been entirely helpful.

You have reviewed the structure of guided reading in the school after having held training sessions with the teaching staff. All of the reading books have now been graded according to difficulty, and teachers are starting to approach guided reading sessions with a clearer understanding of what they hope pupils will gain from the sessions.

You have raised teachers' awareness of the importance attached to pupils' expected rates of progress and have linked teachers' performance targets to the progress made by the pupils in their classes. You are tackling weaker teaching by seeking appropriate training for those teachers whose practice is not consistently good.

As a newly appointed headteacher in a school facing a number of challenging circumstances, it is important to take advantage of links with similar schools which have moved to 'good', and to discuss successful strategies with senior leaders of such schools.

Members of the governing body are fully aware of the challenges the school faces and were not prepared to appoint a permanent headteacher unless they were convinced about his or her ability to drive improvement. Those governors with whom I met demonstrated a sound awareness of what the school needs to do to improve, and they have carried out research into how schools are successful in improving outcomes for those pupils who receive pupil premium. They carry out scheduled visits to the school with a particular focus in mind, for example pupils' development of literacy skills or the teaching of phonics.

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 has identified the school as being vulnerable, and monitors the school's performance through its improvement board every six weeks. It has provided some support for weaker teaching and has commissioned its Early Years consultant to work with the school.

The local authority has also suggested a senior leader who might offer support and challenge, but you have not yet taken up this offer of support. An independent school improvement partner has also provided guidance on writing your school improvement plan. This school improvement partner has worked with the school for some time, but there is no demonstrable evidence of this support having impacted significantly on raising standards. The Diocese has also offered guidance on school improvement planning. Governors say that external support and guidance have not been well co-ordinated.

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

Yours sincerely

John Daniell  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**