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Mrs M Kunzer
Acting Headteacher
St Edburg's Church of England (VA) School
Cemetery Road
Bicester
Oxfordshire
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Dear Mrs Kunzer

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Edburg's Church of England (VA) School

Following my visit to your school on 21 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 September 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:

- clarify in the action plan the resources required to bring about improvements.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, your acting deputy headteacher, the chair of governors, and a mathematics consultant providing support for the school. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. We went on a tour of the school visiting most classes, and talked to pupils. I evaluated a range of documentation including the school post-ofsted action plan, information

relating to the monitoring of teaching, information about pupils' progress and records of governors meetings. I looked at a selection of pupils' books. A check was made of the single central record of staff vetting.

Context

The school have just heard that they will be moving to a new larger building in the winter of 2016.

Main findings

The action plan focusses well on the areas for improvement. The actions are logical to bring about the required change. It is clear who is responsible for each action and the plan identifies small steps that can be checked on the way towards your longer term goals. How and by whom monitoring will be carried out is also clear. The resources required to make the required changes, such as costs or time, are not currently identified and this addition would strengthen the plan.

There is evidence of an improvement in teaching which is having a positive effect on pupils' learning. Marking in books is becoming more constructive. As well as positive comments, teachers are beginning to record ways that pupils' can improve their work, such as in a Year 4 book, suggesting using a dictionary to correct spellings. In a Year 1 book there was an extension question, 'who would you like to invite to tea?', inviting the pupil to respond.

On our learning walk you were able to point out to me what a positive difference the staff team in early years had made to the learning environment. They have defined learning areas more clearly and linked their role-play area into their topic of 'the little red hen'. These actions are all supporting children's learning more effectively. In Key Stage 1 and 2, learning walls are now evident and are beginning to be used by pupils as a resource.

Teacher's questioning is also developing. It is beginning to be used to probe pupils understanding more deeply, for example in a Year 5 mathematics lesson on decimals.

As senior leaders you know what needs to be done to secure improvement, have a clear plan in place and have wasted no time in implementing it. You are developing with staff a real culture of all adults and pupils as learners and are using the broad curriculum to support this. In the Year 4 session, where pupils were designing and painting 'stained glass' windows, pupils could talk animatedly about the process of 'tickling the page with the brush' to achieve a clear line. They could also link what they were learning about to the work of Gaudi.

Your monitoring of teaching is clearly linked to the identified areas of development. Where weaknesses have been found, training and support have swiftly been put in place. Pupils at risk of underachieving, particularly the more vulnerable, are being quickly identified and interventions put in place, which are then rigorously monitored and evaluated. Progress is already beginning to be seen with pupils who have previously struggled to become involved with learning, so that some are now carrying on with work at home.

As a school you are working hard to get parents more engaged with their children's learning. You have put in place 'Maths mail' and 'learning alongside your child sessions'. It is too early to measure the impact of these initiatives yet. However, it was good to hear that nearly 95% of parents recently attended a parents evening; significantly up on previous figures. In order to strengthen your work with parents, you are sensibly in the process of appointing a 'Home/School link' worker, and have redefined the role of an existing staff member to include working with the community.

I am pleased that middle leadership is being developed. You have made clear your expectations and are arranging training. As developing mathematics is so important for the school, it is sensible for a senior leader to be taking that responsibility currently, successfully driving swift improvements.

Governors began to reorganise themselves following the inspection and are already building well on the initial feedback from the external review. They are sensibly carrying out an audit of skills to ensure that they can fully support the school moving forward. The forthcoming pupil premium review will provide additional information to support their development.

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 is providing a wealth of wide ranging, very useful support for the school. This includes providing subject specific consultants, leadership support and also the brokering of school to school support. The right regularity of meetings to check the impact of these measures has been established.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Bridger-Wilkinson
Seconded Inspector