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7 May 2015

Mrs Deborah Eveleigh  
Executive Headteacher  
Burlescombe Church of England Primary School  
Burlescombe  
Tiverton  
EX16 7JH

Dear Mrs Eveleigh

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Burlescombe Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 May 2015, 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 December 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 senior leaders continue to check carefully that planned actions are implemented and are improving pupils' achievement
- ensure that the headteacher provides timely evaluations of the school's progress, so that governors are better prepared to check the impact of the school's getting to good plan on raising pupils' achievement
- draw up a cycle of monitoring events that includes members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders to ensure monitoring events are completed at appropriate intervals.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, the Governing Body and a telephone conversation took place with a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was reviewed, including the latest information on pupils' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, performance management and appraisal arrangements and feedback to staff following lesson observations. During the visit, you joined me on visits to each class and we looked at pupils' work in books.

## **Context**

The governing body has set up a new committee to monitor the progress of the school's improvement plan. The school has increased the amount of support provided by teaching assistants.

## **Main findings**

You are taking appropriate action to address the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. You communicate high expectations and maintain the school's drive to improve through your regular monitoring. The school improvement plan appropriately addresses the areas identified in the most recent inspection. You have organised the plan well into separate sections that clearly set out the actions that will take place each term. The actions described in the plan are linked closely to appraisal and performance targets set for teachers. As a result, staff are clear how improvements in their individual classes contribute to the school's journey to get to good. You regularly review the school's progress and share your evaluations with governors orally at committee meetings. In this way governors are provided with the information that they need to follow the school's progress. However, this format does not provide governors with enough opportunity to prepare questions or the chance to ask for additional information to be presented in time for their meetings.

Teachers are better at planning English lessons that are matched to pupils' needs. They now regularly plan a sequence of activities that are having a clear impact on developing pupils' writing skills. Lesson plans are detailed but are now more focused around a central aim of helping pupils to produce a good-quality piece of writing. We saw evidence that teachers are increasingly identifying where pupils run into problems and pick up and address misunderstandings swiftly instead of pressing on. Consequently, pupils' confidence and appetite to learn is growing. We saw how pupils were more enthusiastic and were keen to produce better quality writing. Work in pupils' books shows they are taking more care to present their written work carefully.

Children in the Reception and Year 1 class are improving their early writing skills and developing an increasing knowledge of letters and their sounds. We saw adults successfully prompting children to hold a pencil in a controlled manner, to form regular and evenly sized letters and to put spaces between written words. Encouragingly, we noticed that children in Reception were confident to sound out parts of a word for themselves and then go on to spell words correctly. As we walked around the school we noticed pupils making good use of clear and helpful displays to punctuate their writing correctly.

The subject leader of Literacy has set out a clear action plan to address weaknesses in pupils' reading and writing. New approaches to teaching writing and to developing pupils' reading comprehension are beginning to make a positive difference. In the first few weeks after the inspection, teachers were given regular advice and guidance on how to improve. The Literacy leader followed up effectively to check how pupils were responding to the new school approaches. She provided further advice and guidance in meetings with staff that helped to maintain the level of progress. However, some of the more recent monitoring events have not taken place because of other commitments and demands on her time. Governors are unable to check that monitoring has been completed on time, because of a lack of a clear overarching timetable.

The members of the governing body have formed a separate committee to monitor the school's getting to good plan. In order to keep up-to-date with the school's progress they meet regularly. Their increasing familiarity with the school's information on pupils' achievement has resulted in a greater understanding of the school's performance overall. They are aware of the need to raise the achievement of Year 6 pupils and that this remains a priority for the school. Governors on the getting to good committee acknowledge they need to draw up plans to more regularly visit the school so that they can check that actions are making a difference to pupils' achievement and that they are completed on time.

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 continues to provide suitable support. They have provided timely advice and guidance in preparing the school's improvement plan. Local authority representatives have helped to develop the leadership of Literacy. Senior leaders and staff are benefitting from visits to, and the support of, local schools. This support is contributing to developing the teaching of early reading and writing in Reception and embedding a new approach to improving pupils' writing. Local authority representatives are aware that the school is receiving support from local schools but have not set up procedures to ensure that the support received impacts positively on pupils' achievement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Devon and as below.

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield

**Her Majesty's Inspector**