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Ms Maureen Basford
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Dear Ms Basford

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Great Gidding CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 21 April 2016, 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 2015. 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- Improve the quality of teaching provided for the younger pupils in school, and especially those in the early years foundation stage.
- Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils, and especially boys, can achieve so that they match those in upper key stage 2.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with the interim headteacher, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation and assessment documentation. I visited lessons in all classes, observing teaching and looking at pupils' work.

Main findings

You have acted effectively to make improvements in important aspects of the school's work. Your self-evaluation is clear and represents a realistic picture of where the school is currently, and what else needs to be done in order for the school's work to be judged as good.

The quality of teaching of children in the early years foundation stage is no longer inadequate. Training, including observing and working with an outstanding teacher, has raised the standard of teaching for the children in Reception. There is more to do here; teaching is not yet linking the activities on offer to the children to the next steps of learning that they need to take as a group and as individuals. Children spend too much time without adult support and some of their learning is consequently incidental. The outdoor learning environment for the early years foundation stage is much improved. It is well resourced, bright and stimulating. Children are enthusiastic about learning in this space. Your current assessments indicate that most children will achieve a good level of development this year; this is a real improvement on the last two years.

Learning in the other two classes is variable. Pupils in upper key stage 2 are making good progress. The work in pupils' books shows that almost all of them take care with their work and are proud of what they do. The standard of writing for some pupils exceeds expectations for their age; pupils are writing in a range of styles and are making good use of the different grammatical devices that they have been learning about. Pupils could, for example, point out modal verbs and explain how they can be used. The science work that these pupils are doing is also of a very high standard. Pupils in lower key stage 2 are making less progress. Expectations of what they can achieve are not high enough to promote quicker learning and this is reflected in the quality of work that pupils are producing in their books. Boys' work, in particular, is presented poorly and with too little care or pride. This is in contrast to pupils' work in upper key stage 2, which is very well presented.

Governance has improved since the inspection. Governors acted swiftly to arrange an external review of their work. The areas for improvement identified during this review have been implemented and, as a result, governors are now much more strategic in their work. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have gained first-hand experience through a series of visits.

You have implemented a new assessment system in recent months. This is enabling leaders and governors to track pupils' progress more accurately and is helping you to understand more precisely where additional support is needed. You have facilitated a training programme for teaching assistants to build their capacity for providing specific support for pupils in reading, writing, phonics and mathematics. This means that teaching assistants are more effectively deployed, and are making more of a difference to learning than has been the case in the past. You have combined this work with your leadership of special educational needs within the school.

External support

The local authority has provided good support since the inspection. The school has accessed specific support for mathematics, special educational needs or disability, and leadership and management, in addition to more extensive support for the early years foundation stage. The local authority undertook the review of governance without charging the school for this extra service. The outcomes of the report have been instrumental in the improvement of governance. The diocese has provided some support for the school, specifically around improving the leadership of mathematics and English.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Ely, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cambridgeshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Moodie
Her Majesty's Inspector