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Ms Nicola Parker
Headteacher
Orchards Church of England Primary School
Cherry Road
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PE13 3NP

Dear Ms Parker

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

Following my visit to your school on 1 October 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 May 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not 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:

- commission a review of governance urgently
- ensure that the school development plan focuses sharply on the areas for improvement from the Ofsted report
- expect more pupils to achieve the same as others nationally for their age, by setting aspirational targets in reading, writing, mathematics and phonics
- develop the effectiveness of middle leaders, so that they have an impact on raising standards for pupils in the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school development plan and post-Ofsted plan were evaluated. You took me on a guided tour of the school, visiting all of the classrooms. I observed the teaching of mathematics in Year 2, Year 3 and Year 6 as well as the teaching of writing in Year 2. I scrutinised a range of documentation, in-school performance information and examples of pupils' work in books. Systems for vetting and recruiting staff were checked.

Context

Since the previous inspection there have been no significant changes to the leadership and governance of the school.

Main findings

Outcomes for pupils remain significantly below national expectations for reading, writing and mathematics. Even though school leaders explained that they have started to train staff in subjects such as phonics, results for 2015 have declined further and are woefully low. Leaders' expectations of pupils' achievement are still too low and they do not set aspirational targets for pupils. Leaders do not monitor and evaluate the impact of their actions sufficiently well and critically enough. Governors are too reliant upon the information given by the headteacher and are not asking challenging questions to hold senior leaders to account for raising pupils' achievement quickly enough. As a result, the outcomes remain below the national floor standards at Key Stage 2 for reading, writing and mathematics again for 2015. For 2016, leaders' expectations for pupils in Key Stage 1 are even lower.

The post-Ofsted action plan is not sufficiently focused on the actions needed to raise pupil achievement. This has resulted in the improvements in the quality of teaching and learning not having swift enough impact or being seen consistently throughout the school. Leaders are not systematically ensuring that pupils are given consistently high-quality learning in reading, writing and mathematics. Senior leaders have not focused on the crucial areas for improvement and are not tackling weak teaching. For example, in mathematics in Year 6, pupils are often bored as too little is expected of them and the subject knowledge of teachers is too shallow.

Governors have still not yet commissioned the review of governance and this is now a matter of urgency. They do not challenge leaders well enough and are accepting of standards that are too low.

During my visit, pupils' behaviour was exemplary, both within classrooms and around the school. Pupils are respectful towards adults and interact well with each other while learning and playing. They display a positive attitude to learning and

want to work hard, when given the opportunity. Pupils show in their books that they can write at the level required for their age.

Safeguarding arrangements in the school were adequate, but require more frequent checks by school leaders.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has concerns about the school and officers are monitoring developments closely. The local authority is providing high levels of support and challenge to school leaders. An adviser regularly works with the senior leaders, but the impact remains limited due to a lack of rigorous systems as well as a lack of focus on the core issues of school improvement by school leaders.

I will return to the school during the spring term 2016 to review progress.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire and the Diocese of Ely. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector