

17 November 2015

Mr Andrew Massey
Headteacher
Martley CofE Primary School
Martley
Worcester
WR6 6QA

Dear Mr Massey

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Martley CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 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 April 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 recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that all leaders focus on the progress made by different groups of pupils when carrying out observations of teaching and looking at pupils' books
- ensure that middle leaders analyse the information that is collected on pupils' attainment and progress to assess the success of initiatives they have introduced
- review provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that boys achieve as well as girls.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher and members of staff with leadership responsibilities for subjects and aspects, including English, mathematics, early years and special educational needs. These meetings focused on the impact of actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

You and the deputy headteacher joined me on visits to most classes. We talked to pupils about their work and looked at the evidence in their books. I also had further discussions with pupils from Year 6. The school improvement plan was evaluated, together with a range of documentation including attendance information, a report on governance, monitoring records about the quality of teaching and the latest information about pupils' achievement.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a new deputy headteacher and special needs coordinator have been appointed. The early years teacher is now the early years leader and teaches full time. Some staff with leadership roles have changed year groups in order to accelerate progress in specific classes. Since September, you have reorganised the groupings in some classes: Reception class and Year 6 are now taught in single rather than mixed-age year groups. Year 1 pupils do, however, still have access to the Reception class resources and teaching when needed. The three other classes continue to be taught in mixed-age groups. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed.

Main findings

You have responded well to the key areas identified in the last inspection. Appointments have been made to fill the leadership vacancies which existed. Statutory information for parents is now available on the school's website, although technical difficulties have occasionally prevented you from uploading updated documents. As a result, you have decided to change the contract and manage the website from within your own organisation. You showed me a range of examples in pupils' books and school displays which demonstrate that pupils are taught about different cultures and other world religions. Pupils themselves talked to me about visits to different places of worship and their correspondence with pen pals in the partner school in Tanzania.

You have strengthened the leadership team, which has created clear action plans for school improvement. Those teachers with responsibilities have an accurate understanding of strengths and areas which need improving. For example, the English leader has taken positive steps not only to raise achievement in reading, but also to increase pupils' engagement and enjoyment. More 'boy-friendly' texts have been purchased and book corners have been set up in all classrooms. Other incentives include being awarded the newly introduced 'Dojo points' for increasing the number of books pupils read. Books have been re-banded and pupils themselves now take responsibility for changing their own books. Other leaders have carried out audits of their subjects and show high levels of determination to accelerate pupils' progress. The mathematics leader identified pupils' reasoning and use of mathematical language as areas for improvement across the school. She has organised training and purchased resources to support teachers develop these aspects. Improved links with the pre-school have enabled a smoother transition into

Reception class and earlier identification and support for children who are disabled or have special educational needs. As yet, these leaders are not in a position to monitor effectively the success of initiatives and actions put in place; a new assessment system has been introduced and they are completing training in using this so that they can measure the impact of their actions on pupils' progress.

You and the governors have focused intently on improving the quality of teaching. Training and visits to other schools have helped teachers extend their knowledge and skills. Teaching, learning and marking policies have been revised. Even so, the monitoring of teaching by senior leaders in all year groups remains an area for improvement because it does not focus sharply enough on the progress that pupils are making in their lessons and their books. As a result, this monitoring does not pinpoint areas for development sharply enough.

On the whole, teaching is improving. Effective guidance is given to pupils about how to improve their work in English and mathematics, but the same quality of marking is not applied in other subjects. Teachers generally take good account of boys' and girls' needs in planning active, engaging and interesting lessons, but there is still some variability across the school. For example, activities are not always planned or monitored closely enough in the early years to ensure that boys make as much progress as girls. In a few classes, there remain instances where pupils are asked to complete undemanding, low-level tasks that restrict the progress they can make.

Pupils in Year 6 who left the school in 2015 achieved well, and school assessments suggest that achievement is rising for those currently in Key Stage 2. Assessment records also show that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are improving; they were in line with the national average in 2015. Outcomes at the end of early years, however, were lower than the previous year and below the national average. Since April, leadership of the early years provision has been well supported by local authority advisers. Assessments passed on by pre-school about the children are now being used to inform the planning of activities.

Governors have responded swiftly to the recommendations made at the last full inspection. The external review of governance has been carried out and governors have generated their own detailed action plan. Communication and dissemination of information have been strengthened, with school documents being shared and stored electronically. While it is too early to judge the impact of these actions, governors are demonstrating a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are asking more probing questions and are taking a more active role, for example by meeting with subject leaders and contributing towards the compilation of the school improvement plan. They have also had additional training to improve their understanding of school data, to manage finances efficiently and to help them carry out the performance management of the headteacher effectively.

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 provided a suitable range of support for staff, especially in relation to English and the early years. The local authority representative knows the school well and is providing senior leaders with a good level of support and challenge. She keeps a close check on the progress made by the school through the regular 'project board' meetings that take place, and visits to the school. She has also helped to make links for staff with other local schools. Leadership and management support has been arranged with both a national and local leader of education but additional support agreed for this year has not yet begun. The support provided to date from all parties has contributed to improvements in teaching and leadership.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector