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Mr Michael Lynch
Acting Executive Headteacher
Stutton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Holbrook Road
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Dear Mr Lynch

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stutton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1 July 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 December 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the substantive executive headteacher, the chair of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plan and your monitoring information were evaluated. A learning walk enabled me to observe pupils at work in lessons.

Context

Following the last inspection, the headteacher and all teaching staff left the school. Seventeen pupils also left mid-way through the year. The local authority asked you

as a national leader of education and headteacher of a local outstanding primary school to lead and manage the school on a temporary basis.

This term, an experienced assistant headteacher from your own school has taught pupils in key stage 2. Governors are currently in the process of appointing a new teacher to teach this class from September 2016. A higher-level teaching assistant has taught Reception children and pupils in key stage 1 this term. A new teacher has been appointed to teach this class from September. A leader of a local outstanding primary school has been appointed to lead the school permanently from September as the executive headteacher. An existing governor took over as chair of the governing body in March 2016.

Main findings

You have acted promptly to rescue this school from failing. Your knowledge, experience and hard work have halted the school's decline and it is now operating much more effectively. This has raised staff morale and reassured parents and the local community that this school is 'back on its feet' and improving. You and your staff have won the confidence and full cooperation of pupils, who are now attending regularly, making progress and really enjoying school.

Your willingness to share the skills of your own staff with another school has been the key to achieving this. Critically, one of your teachers has provided older pupils with sustained, good-quality teaching on a daily basis. Pupils' books show that this has re-engaged them in lessons and has them 'back on track' with their learning and progress. Furthermore, deploying your school's family liaison worker and coordinator of special educational needs to work periodically in the school has helped to rebuild links with the community and fully meet its statutory obligations.

My observations of pupils at work in lessons confirmed that their behaviour is good and that they are suitably engaged in learning. This is more noticeable in Years 5 and 6, where one of your experienced and effective teachers has raised expectations and accelerated pupils' achievement. Pupils are expected to work hard and present their work neatly. Tasks are designed to stimulate pupils' interest and provide enough challenge for the different ages and abilities in the class. Marking is thorough; pupils correct basic errors and are given regular opportunities to respond to the comments made to help them improve their work.

Assessment is rigorous, systematic and provides a clear overview of how well pupils are doing. Despite intensive work with Year 6 pupils to fill significant gaps in their learning and accelerate their progress, your monitoring data shows that results in national tests in reading, and to a lesser extent mathematics, will be lower than expected this year.

Pupils talked enthusiastically with me about the improvements made. They feel that the biggest changes are in behaviour, saying that 'there is much more discipline

now', and that their lessons are much more challenging and interesting. They appreciate the feedback in their books, and the many other things to do outside of lessons, including sport, music and singing. You have also helped to enrich their learning by enabling them to learn and play together with pupils from your own school in a range of curriculum events and enrichment activities.

Improvements are less noticeable in key stage 1. Pupils are well behaved but not always challenged fully. The current arrangements to teach the Reception class and key stage 1 pupils together, and how the indoor and outdoor spaces are used, do not help to promote good learning. Plans are in place to improve this under the guidance of a newly appointed teacher who is an experienced and effective early years practitioner.

Your interim action plan highlights the range of improvements needed and is suitably focused on the areas for improvement identified during the last inspection. You are monitoring the improvements being made and, at suitable intervals, sharing this with governors to keep them informed of the school's development. Governors appreciate the improved flow of information provided for them. Many of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection are being dealt with. For example, behaviour is much improved, and many of the inadequacies in leadership and management do not apply to the current leadership of the school. Improvement plans will be amended further from the start of the next academic year.

The appointment of a new executive headteacher adds significantly to the school's capacity to maintain improvements and develop the school further. At this point you will step back and let the school's new leaders and staff secure further improvement. The new executive headteacher is very ambitious for the school, aiming to get it to good by the end of this year. Plans are under way to forge stronger links between staff and those at her current school in order to promote best practice.

Governors share her aspirations and see no reason why the school cannot continue to improve and be judged good at its next inspection. They appreciate the prompt steps you took to 'steady the ship', provide much-needed leadership and your willingness to share without reservation the good practice established in your own school.

They recognise the need to make the school an attractive proposition for children and families in the local community and beyond, in order to increase the size of the school. They are supportive of the interim plans and the actions being taken to make teaching consistently good.

External support

The local authority played a key role in brokering immediate support for the school once weaknesses became evident and staff and pupils began to leave. Since then it

has provided effective additional training for staff, monitored improvements and helped it to develop new partnerships with other schools. The specialist support provided in appointing new staff, including a new headteacher, is valued highly by governors.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector