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Julie Wilson
Headteacher
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Pershore
WR10 2QB

Dear Miss Wilson

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Fladbury CofE First School

Following my visit to your school on 6–7 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in January 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

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

Yours sincerely

David Rzeznik
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2013

- Improve teaching and learning and so raise achievement by:
 - ensuring that teachers set high expectations and run lessons at an appropriately brisk pace
 - planning more carefully the way teaching assistants are deployed in lessons so that they all fully support pupils' progress
 - managing pupils well so that they do not become distracted from their learning
 - using assessment information to provide the correct degree of support and challenge for each pupil
 - marking pupils' work thoroughly and setting clear targets to improve their understanding of the quality of their work and how it can be improved.

- Develop the leadership, management and governance of the school through:
 - increasing the frequency and rigour of checks made on teaching and learning
 - using assessment information to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress
 - encouraging all appropriate staff to take responsibilities for improving the school
 - ensuring the governing body uses the information from the checks they make on the school to offer more robust challenges to leaders and managers.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 6–7 November 2013.

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, leaders with responsibility for English and mathematics, and the school improvement adviser. The inspection concentrated on evaluating the extent of improvement made in addressing serious weaknesses in teaching, learning, leadership and management.

The inspector observed seven lessons, and all teachers were observed at least twice, teaching different subjects. Two of the lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher. Feedback was given to all teachers and the teaching assistant, so that they knew what was working well and what must be improved. A scrutiny of pupils' work was undertaken with the headteacher to evaluate the quality of marking, particularly in mathematics and writing, and its impact on accelerating pupils' progress. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school improvement plan, pupil attainment and progress data, monitoring and evaluation records produced by senior leaders and governors, and local authority reports that evaluate the quality of education provided. The single central register was checked to ensure that the weaknesses identified in April 2013 had been remedied effectively. The inspector also took into account the 20 responses to the online Ofsted parental questionnaire (Parent View). Pupils' views were sought informally.

Context

There have been significant staff changes since September 2013. There are currently three class teachers and two teaching assistants working in this first school, plus the headteacher. One teaches the youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception); one teaches a Year 1/2 class and another Year 3/4 class. The teaching assistant is deployed across Years 1 to 4.

The teachers and teaching assistant working in Years 1 to 4 are new and are suitably experienced. They all started work at the beginning of the autumn term 2013. Two teachers were employed because the Year 1/2 and Year 3/4 class teachers left in July 2013. Two teaching assistants also left in July 2013. One teaching assistant was employed to replace them. A part-time finance secretary was also employed in December 2012.

There have been changes to leadership responsibilities, as from September 2013. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has taken responsibility for mathematics and the Year 3/4 teacher is English leader.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher and governors are doing a good job and they are driving improvement at a fast pace, particularly since September 2013. The headteacher has turned this school around, with the very good support provided by governors. The quality of education has markedly improved since January 2013. It took six months to eradicate poor teaching and put in place the required training for staff and governors to increase their effectiveness. Between January and July 2013, the necessary changes to improve teaching, curriculum and leadership practices were made to raise standards and staff expectations. The school is now reaping the rewards of taking the right actions to address the main weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.

Staff changes have significantly improved the quality of teaching and learning. The leadership of mathematics and English is in good hands and is effective. As a result, pupils' progress is accelerating at a good rate. Ambitious targets have been set so that pupils catch up quickly and recover lost ground. The school has received good support from local authority advisers, particularly to improve the methods used to teach reading, writing and mathematics effectively. All appropriate staff are now taking responsibility for improving the school.

The headteacher and governors are ambitious and have rigorously implemented well-focused improvement plans, which are based on good-quality self-evaluation. The first monitoring inspection, in April 2013, identified some minor weaknesses in the contents of the school improvement plan and the single central record. All weaknesses have been remedied. For example, the role of governors in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is explicit, and measures to judge success are clear. The single central record contains all of the required recruitment and vetting information.

The governing body has moved on in leaps and bounds since January 2013. Their knowledge, skills and understanding have improved as a result of the training that they have received. A restructuring of governors' responsibilities has ensured that their work is better organised and is more efficient. The governing body has established clear written protocols to guide their work. Governors are regularly undertaking rigorous checks of the school's performance; for example, visiting classrooms to see what is happening first-hand or talking to subject leaders about the impact of initiatives on school outcomes. Some governors support learning in classrooms; for example, hearing pupils read or supporting pupils with their class work. Such activity helps governors to gain a good understanding of school life and the impact of new initiatives. Increased governor visibility has improved communication with staff, pupils and parents.

Governors have improved communication with parents through direct contact, newsletters and an improved website. Most of the parents who completed the online questionnaire think that the school is well managed and that their child is taught well, and all would recommend the school to another parent.

Governors receive good-quality reports about the quality of teaching and learning from the headteacher and from termly local authority inspections. In addition, the headteacher provides a high-quality analysis of pupils' attainment and progress in every year. Consequently, governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and know how the school's performance compares to national norms. Effective data analysis informs intervention and the actions taken to bring about further improvement. Assessment information is suitably used to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress.

Governors are appropriately calling senior leaders to account. For example, the curriculum and standards committee use a set of focused questions to check how well standards are rising and the extent of improvements in teaching and learning. A separate governors' monitoring group is effectively overseeing, with the school improvement adviser, the progress that is being made in addressing key priorities and checks if targets are met or not.

New English and mathematics leaders have increased the school's capacity to stand on its own two feet and to reduce the amount of support provided by the local authority and others. The two leaders are improving teaching by, for example, ensuring a calculation policy is adopted quickly and by trialling new ways of teaching writing in the Year 1/2 class. Both leaders ensure that initiatives are properly evaluated and outcomes are reported to governors.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Teaching and learning in Years 1 to 4 are improving. The good teaching seen in January 2013 in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been maintained. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated. Pupils' progress has accelerated quickly in Years 1 to 4 because the new experienced teachers are teaching well. They have significantly improved pupils' attitudes towards learning; individuals' behaviour and learning expectations are much higher. As a result, most pupils have made good gains in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics this academic year.
- Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching are robust. The headteacher has been instrumental in improving the leadership of teaching. Training is suitably targeted to improve teachers' subject knowledge and the methods and resources used to teach subjects. Good use has been made of local authority advisers to improve teaching, learning, assessment and the range and quality of the activities provided.
- Teachers usually plan activities that are interesting, engaging and purposeful. For example, outdoor learning in the forest area is of good quality, and pupils love building 'alien homes', making mud pies and digging for worms. Most of the activities provided are suitably challenging and work is largely matched to pupils' capabilities. Expectations as to what must be achieved are generally high; lessons move along at a good pace and time is used well.

- Teachers and assistants manage pupils' behaviour well and a variety of approaches are used to ensure that learning is not disrupted and pupils are not distracted from their work. This said, there are a small number of boys in the Year 1/2 class, who have difficulty sitting still, despite the teacher's best efforts to get them to do so.
- The teaching assistant is suitably deployed and supports learning in a variety of productive ways; for example, teaching letters and sounds to Year 1 and 2 pupils and supporting pupils in Years 3 and 4 to write historical facts. There is good one-to-one support for individuals who find learning difficult. First-hand evidence shows that the support provided improves individuals' behaviour and their attitudes to learning, and ensures that lesson objectives are met.
- Marking of pupils' work is of good quality. Teachers are following the school's marking guidance closely and the feedback that is given to pupils is constructive and developmental. Pupils are clear about the strengths in their work and what must be improved. They are set clear targets in English and mathematics and they check whether these are met or not.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Teachers do not always establish what pupils can and cannot do before they plan work. Assessment information is not always used effectively to inform lesson planning. Occasionally, individuals are given work that is not properly matched to their specific needs or ability. This means that pupils consolidate their learning rather than having it extended.
- Lesson plans clearly identify the objectives to be taught and the activities to be covered, and specify the criteria to judge success. However, the level of the work done by different groups is not always made sufficiently explicit. The planning for activities that children do on their own in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not comprehensive enough. Lesson objectives are not matched closely enough to the activities carried out, and it is not made sufficiently explicit how adults will support learning and when.
- The monitoring of teaching records do not contain enough information about the quality of learning and the impact teaching is making on pupils' progress. No overarching judgements are made by leaders for teaching and learning; however, an overall judgement is made about the quality of the lesson, using Ofsted's four-point scale.

External support

Very good support has been provided by local authority advisers and the governor service department in the authority. Governor training has improved governors' effectiveness. Termly inspections, led by the school improvement adviser, have

clearly identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. There has been good follow-up of any shortcomings identified during inspections to ensure that they are properly addressed. English and mathematics support has improved subject leadership, and targeted training has improved the methods and resources used to teach subjects. The headteacher has worked well with a local headteacher, who is also a leader in education. The partnership has been beneficial in improving office organisation and has enabled teachers to view outstanding practice.