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Mr R Tollyfield
Headteacher
Chyngton School
Millberg Road
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East Sussex
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Dear Mr Tollyfield

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit Chyngton School

Following my visit to your school on 4 December 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 2013. 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:

- introduce and develop rapidly a coherent and progressive system for teaching phonics (linking letters and sounds) throughout Reception and Key Stage 1 and, as needed, Key Stage 2
- revise the approach taken to spending pupil premium funding, so that it has more impact on closing the gap between the attainment of pupils entitled to pupil premium and those not.

Evidence

During the visit, I spoke with you, the two assistant headteachers, governors and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated school documents, including the

school improvement plan and your reports to governors. We made short visits together to all of the classes and looked at samples of pupils' work.

Main findings

You are providing very clear and thoughtful leadership. You show the determination, sensitivity and steeliness which will all be necessary if the school is to succeed in its efforts to become good. You have learned much about the school quickly; school self-evaluation is accurate and honest. You know the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and have applied your experience to prompt and lead sensible and well-paced changes. The school improvement plan is well-constructed. It focuses attention effectively and leads to action in key areas, guiding improvement in a measured and determined way. Rightly, there is a firm focus on mathematics.

There are already clear signs of improvements in teaching, in many year groups. Staff have worked hard to make classrooms enticing and vibrant. Lessons appear carefully structured. There are some improvements in the way the work set in lessons is matched to pupils' learning needs and teachers' expectations of pupils are rising. Pupils are ready to learn and were active participants in the lessons we saw together. Teachers' marking of work is thorough. In older year groups, in particular, we saw many examples of where pupils have made improvements to their work by responding to teachers' marking. For the most part, the pupils' writing we looked at showed originality and was reasonably well-presented, with improving use of grammar and punctuation.

The two assistant headteachers both have a broad range of responsibilities, some of them very longstanding. Rightly, you and the governors are considering how the school's leadership structure may be developed to ensure pro-active and effective leadership fully in line with the school's changing needs. All subjects have a leader and there is evidence of some valuable learning by pupils across the curriculum. We discussed how this can be developed further. It was good to hear of interesting learning outside the classroom, such as a recent walk by Year 3 pupils to the Cuckmere River's meanders. The school has pleasant grounds and it was good to hear, too, of plans to develop them so that more learning can take place outdoors.

You know that there is much to do to make the school good from what you call its 'deep trough'. There is a residue of long-term underachievement and pupils' attainment is too low across the school. Too few pupils across the school reach the higher levels of attainment. Year 5 pupils, in particular, are not doing as well as they should, given their assessments at the end of Year 2. We discussed how this can be managed. The gap between the attainment of pupils entitled to pupil premium funding and their peers is much too wide, although there are early signs of improvement in a few year groups. You realise the need for the school to be more inventive in its choices for pupil premium funding and more certain of the impact of this expenditure. You and the assistant headteachers are helpfully using Ofsted's guidance about this, alongside other materials. The dedicated provision for pupils

with special educational needs is not always effective enough, something the governing body has noted astutely. The teaching of phonics (linking letters and sounds) is poorly organised and this is reflected in very low scores in the phonics screening tests in 2013. Under your guidance, staff have been to see effective phonics teaching elsewhere and this has begun to raise expectations. We discussed the necessity of implementing an effective phonics teaching programme urgently.

The governing body's work continues to improve and sharpen. Governors make well-focused visits to the school, to gain very useful first-hand information, which is well linked to the school improvement plan. They know the school and its needs well and contribute valuably through effective support and robust challenge to the headteacher and senior staff.

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

External support

The local authority is also providing valuable support, which the school is using well. For example, several teachers have attended training courses to help improve aspects of the teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex and as below.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector