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Mrs Peta Mather
Headteacher
Wootton Community Primary School
Church Road
Ryde
PO33 4PT

Dear Mrs Mather

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Wootton Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 June 2014, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection, which took place in March 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 and the Director of Children's Services for the Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to make it consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring teachers match work in lessons to pupils' individual needs and especially that it extends more-able pupils
 - making sure pupils understand what they are learning and are given precise examples of what is expected of them
 - making sure teachers talk less in lessons so pupils can more quickly get on with activities and work by themselves
 - ensuring teachers question pupils more skilfully to check how well they are doing in lessons and make adjustments to teaching when necessary.

- Improve the progress pupils make in writing and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2, including pupils supported by pupil premium funding, by:
 - ensuring pupils have regular opportunities to apply their writing and mathematical skills in a range of subjects
 - giving pupils time to respond to comments in teachers' marking so that they can understand how to improve their work.

- Ensure leaders and managers accelerate the pace of improvement by:
 - using information from checks on teaching more rigorously to improve the quality of teaching, with a greater emphasis on its impact on pupils' learning and progress
 - making sure that there is a detailed analysis of the impact of the pupil premium spending on pupils' progress
 - developing the role of middle leaders so that they have a greater impact on improving pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 30 June 2014

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector met with the headteacher and English leader, and observed four lessons jointly with the headteacher. The inspector focused in particular on the quality of teaching in English and the extent to which pupils' progress in writing is improving.

Context

The school has seen a number of changes in teaching staff during the year. Several classes have had a series of teachers. Three new teachers have joined the staff since February 2014. The school's staffing is now stable.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since the last monitoring visit, the headteacher has continued to drive improvements in the quality of teaching and is determined to achieve more good or better teaching at Wootton. The school's plan for improvement has, rightly, kept a sharp focus on improving teaching and pupils' achievement. Tailored coaching and support has been put in place where teaching has needed improvement. The changes in staff, this year, have inevitably meant training has lost impetus to some extent, as new staff have arrived. However, the headteacher has made sure new teachers have been briefed on the school's policies and approaches to teaching. The school's checks on teaching show an improving picture with much less inadequate teaching and more that is good.

The headteacher collates information on pupils' progress and attainment in a clear and manageable way and analyses this information thoroughly. Pupils' progress is checked regularly on an individual basis. Alongside this, the headteacher keeps track of how well different groups are achieving in the school, including the pupils who are supported through additional pupil premium government funding. The headteacher reviews the information from assessments regularly with the senior team. This means leaders who have had less involvement in analysing data in the past are now developing a clearer grasp of what the information shows and, importantly, where further improvement is needed.

The governing body continues to keep in close touch with the school's work and its journey of improvement. The governing body minutes show that governors are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and have a good understanding of pupils' attainment and progress. The pertinent information they receive from the headteacher helps the governors to provide the degree of challenge that is necessary, so that they can play a key role in encouraging further improvement at the school.

Senior leaders and governors have responded well to feedback from the previous monitoring inspection and the work to strengthen leadership in English is developing well. Coaching has been provided for the new English leader to enable him to work alongside the headteacher when observing lessons, and with the school's linked adviser from the local authority, to develop his leadership skills and confidence.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement

- Pupils' progress in writing is improving. More pupils in Year 6 have made expected progress in Key Stage 2 than was the case last year, for the pupils who left Year 6. This year's assessments for Years 2 and 6 also show attainment is improving, in both reading and writing. The results for the Year 1 phonics check, which relates to the sounds letters make and assesses pupils' early reading skills, are much better than last year.
- In the four lessons observed, teachers had considered the needs of pupils' differing abilities and planned work that involved a greater degree of challenge for those who could manage it.
- Teachers are now using questions more effectively to gauge how well pupils are following and understanding what they are learning, and to encourage the pupils to share their ideas. In one lesson, the teacher was quick to identify a group of pupils who were unsure about spotting imperative verbs. The teacher immediately adjusted her approach to work with this small group and explore these verbs from a different angle. This helped the pupils to go back to their work and tackle it with more confidence and success.
- All teachers explain to pupils, at the beginning of lessons, precisely what the teachers want them to achieve so that the pupils are clear about the purpose of the lesson and what they need to do to meet or exceed the teachers' expectations.
- Teachers show pupils how to improve their writing by demonstrating to the class how to structure and improve sentences to make them more interesting for the reader. This was particularly effective when the teacher used specific examples, to illustrate the main learning points, so that the pupils could see for themselves how to use a 'bossy' verb, for example, or a conjunction.
- Teachers are using interesting starting points to inspire pupils to write. This was particularly evident in Year 3, when pupils were writing instructions for a Second World War game. The pupils were brimming over with enthusiasm in recounting their trip as 'evacuees' on a steam train when the train had been stopped by 'soldiers' and they had had to spend time playing games in a field. Boys and girls were equally engrossed in their writing task. They knew exactly what they had to do, and they wanted to work hard and succeed.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and willingness to persevere were a consistent feature in all the lessons that were observed during this monitoring visit.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement

- The strengths that are emerging are not yet consistently embedded. Pupils' books show that teachers' expectations are not uniformly high when it comes

to pupils' writing. Written work that is below par, or poorly presented, is not challenged as a matter of routine. In some classes, more-able pupils are still being given the same tasks as the lower-attaining pupils yet they could tackle more ambitious work.

- The school's marking policy is not being applied consistently in all classes. Ticks or comments such as 'almost there' mean very little. They do not give pupils specific and helpful guidance on what they should do to improve their writing.
- The pupils in Year 6 who are supported by pupil premium funding are lagging too far behind the pupils who do not benefit from this extra money. The gap is much narrower in some of the other year groups but is too wide in Year 4, particularly in writing.

External support

The linked adviser from the local authority (LLP) visits the school regularly to check its progress. The written reports are helpful; they link directly to the school's areas for improvement and identify points for development. These give a clear steer to the headteacher's and governors' work in improving the school further. The school has also drawn on expertise from the local authority, and an external consultant, to support improvements in how reading is taught and the leadership of English. The focus of this coaching has been appropriate and helpful, and a good start has been made. It is still relatively early days, however, and too soon for leadership of English to be demonstrating a strong impact on improving pupils' progress in reading and writing.

Priorities for further improvement

- The school's leaders and staff need to raise the profile of writing in the school and set high standards, so that pupils feel proud of their written work in different subjects. Teachers and pupils would benefit from seeing examples of high-quality work from other schools to illustrate what can, and should, be achieved by pupils of different ages.