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Mr R Tollyfield
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Tollyfield

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chyngton School

Following my visit to your school on 22 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 second 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:

- sustain and continue the improvements made to the quality of teaching, with greater focus on the foundation subjects
- adjust the school improvement plan, so that work is done more quickly to broaden the curriculum and develop the role of subject leaders
- improve pupils' handwriting and presentation of work across the school.

Evidence

During the visit, we toured the school together, observing lessons briefly and looking at pupils' work. I met with you, other senior leaders and representatives of the Governing Body and of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I read your reports on the school and evaluated documents such as the

school improvement plan, data showing the academic progress of pupils and minutes of meetings.

Main findings

You have led the school with energy and clear purpose since your appointment. In many year groups and classes, as a result, standards in English and mathematics have risen. Teaching is clearly better in these subjects, as is the marking of pupils' work. More is expected of the pupils, who are increasingly confident to discuss their work and learning. The school is bright and attractive and we saw pupils engaging fully with their lessons and behaving well. Teachers in each year group plan and work carefully together. The lessons we observed together briefly in English and mathematics appeared mainly well organised and taught. This is very pleasing and good. Well done to everyone involved.

Nevertheless, my main message to the school after this visit, as we discussed, is 'liberate with rigour.' This is because the focus of the school's improvement work, since the inspection, has been narrow, almost entirely focused on English and mathematics. The class timetables we looked at together indicate that there is too little time allocated to other subjects. Although this is understandable up to a point, because standards in English and mathematics were much too low, the school now needs to focus more on the other subjects and areas, which are underdeveloped. As the Chair of Governors rightly put it, the pupils need a holistic education which stretches and provides for all of their talents. (As we discussed together, this is, in turn, likely to help further improvement in English and mathematics.)

You have begun to do this, through the sensible choice of four key areas of work within the school improvement plan. Two of these are about improving curriculum breadth and developing school leadership and management. Nevertheless, the changes are not planned to happen quickly enough. You have, for perfectly good reasons, decided to start the subject development work by improving physical education. However, all the other subjects also need to have focused attention more quickly than is currently planned, certainly starting within this academic year. We saw that, while pupils enjoy some interesting topic work through the new learning journeys, there is much more to do to ensure that all subjects are expertly planned across all the year groups. We noted low standards in some activities in art and music for instance, due to the lack of guidance to the staff about what should be expected.

We also agreed that when teachers give detailed learning objectives in lessons, this is often helpful in raising teachers' expectations of pupils. On the other hand, it may also constrain learning in lessons when creativity and imagination is especially required. Sometimes, more open-ended learning objectives may be useful.

The school improvement plan is a useful working document. It is clear, succinct and precise. Its provision for the improvement of school leadership through 'leaders of learning' and the appointment of a deputy headteacher are well-considered. To make the improvements to the curriculum possible, the plan needs to be adjusted so that roles and responsibilities of subject leaders, beyond English and mathematics, are defined, and working, more quickly.

Your reports to the Governing Body are very detailed and useful in showing how well pupils are doing in English and mathematics. Attainment and progress for the 2014 Year 6 cohort in English and mathematics showed marked improvement. Results in Year 2 were acceptable, though showed little, if any, improvement from the previous year. Outcomes for pupils at the end of the Reception year improved. Your work to improve phonics teaching paid clear dividends, with the Year 1 screening results improving to close to the national average. For the most part, you have clear evidence that the quality of teaching, and progress of pupils, has improved in most classes and year groups. You are taking suitable action where such improvement is not clear. You have helpfully tightened up the performance management arrangements for staff.

Your well-analysed data shows that pupils who are entitled to the support of the pupil premium are making better progress than they were in English and mathematics, though this is a mixed picture. The gap between their attainment and that of their classmates has narrowed overall, but is still too wide. Pupils with special educational needs are not always doing as well as they should. Correctly, you have started a process of re-evaluating the efficiency and value for money of the school's work in these areas.

You are aware that some pupils in the current Year 6 cohort have not made enough progress since their national testing in Year 2. We discussed what is best to do about this. Clearly, high quality teaching, which does not become narrow 'teaching to the test', is important. It is pleasing to see that both Year 6 classes seem to have made a good start this year.

We saw pupils working hard on our tour of the school. We noted, however, that the standards of handwriting and presentation across the school are inconsistent and not always high enough. This should be addressed through whole-school action. I was interested to hear that you have recently discussed this with other local headteachers.

The governing body is well organised and led. Its systems are efficient. Its leaders are rightly pleased with the progress the school has made in the last year. In discussion, these senior governors also understood clearly the importance to the school now of broadening the scope of its improvement work.

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 has played a useful, supportive role in the improvements made in the school. Its lead adviser for the school also recognises that the work needs of the school now needs broadening and, during my visit, made some helpful suggestions about how the local authority could facilitate this.

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

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector