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Mrs Margaret Gwynne
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Dear Mrs Gwynne

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rodmarton School

Following my visit to your school on 6 November, 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 July 2014. 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:

- ensure the school action plan states precisely how and when leaders, including governors, will check that actions taken are improving pupils' achievement and progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, other governors, the subject leader for English and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I undertook a 'focused tour' of the school, and looked at work in pupils' books with you and a governor. I evaluated the school action plan. In addition, I scrutinised a range of

school documentation which included: achievement information, teachers' planning and minutes of governing body meetings. I checked the school's recruitment record to ensure appropriate checks have been made for new staff.

Context

Since the last inspection in July 2014, one new teacher has joined the school. Another teacher is on maternity leave and her class is being taught by a newly qualified teacher. The school continues to be led and managed by an interim headteacher. A new, permanent headteacher has been appointed for 1 January 2015.

Main findings

You have acted quickly to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have gained the trust of the staff, governors and the school community. This has enabled you to drive the pace of change rapidly. The school action plan is detailed and shows clear priorities for improvement. You have set challenging targets which you share with staff and governors. This is raising their expectations of what pupils can achieve. Your key focus on improving the quality of teaching is beginning to raise pupils' achievement. However, the action plan is less clear in setting out how and when your leaders and governors will check your actions are improving pupils' achievement and progress.

You quickly identified the need to train teachers to accurately check pupils' achievement and progress. Teachers now have a detailed understanding of what pupils already know and their next steps in learning. As a result, they are using this information to plan work that stretches and challenges pupils. Pupils are clear these challenges are helping them learn at a faster rate. For example, a pupil in Year 6 stated, 'challenges help me to work harder and learn more'.

You have reviewed the marking policy this term. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers are now using these guidelines consistently in English and mathematics. Teachers are giving pupils clear guidance, such as using 'steps to success' and precise comments on how to improve the quality of their work. The recent focus on teaching handwriting is having a very positive impact on pupils' presentation. Pupils are taking pride in their work and as a result, they are achieving at a faster rate.

Leaders and governors have focused sharply on improving the quality of teaching in mathematics. With your guidance, teachers are becoming skilled at identifying and addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. In order to set standards for good teaching, you have implemented a set of 'non-negotiable' expectations for teachers. This is helping them to know how to improve their practice. For example, teachers are questioning pupils effectively to assess their understanding. They then set activities which challenge pupils' thinking and understanding so less time is lost

in lessons. Teachers appreciate the time they have to work together and share their practice. This is helping them develop their knowledge of teaching mathematics effectively. Gaps in pupils' mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding are beginning to close.

The governing body acted swiftly to appoint a permanent headteacher for January 2015. They also recognised the need to restructure the teaching team. They managed this process smoothly, with you as interim headteacher, in readiness for the start of the academic year. Governors new to their roles are committed to bringing greater levels of challenge to school leaders. Following the inspection, they realised they did not know how well pupils were achieving. They have since received training from a governor with relevant expertise. They are now asking increasingly probing questions about the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement and progress. This is enabling them to hold school leaders to account more effectively.

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 providing good support to you and your staff to help the school move forward. During an unsettled time for the school, they provided an interim headteacher and two experienced governors. This has enabled the school to improve under your leadership. They check frequently that actions taken are improving the school and provide the support needed. For example, they have provided training in teaching mathematics and support for the newly qualified teacher.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Leahy

Her Majesty's Inspector