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Mr Craig Williams
Headteacher
Purbrook Junior School
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Dear Mr Williams

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Purbrook Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 4 December 2014, 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 September 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:

- insert timescales and deadlines into the school's action plan for getting to good, to help leaders and governors check that the planned actions are running to timescale and there is no slippage
- calculate the gaps between the disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils (nationally) in each year so that these can be closed as much and as quickly as possible.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, the inclusion leader, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school plan for getting to good was reviewed. We visited a number of lessons, with the deputy headteacher, for a short period to see how some of the aspects you are working on are being put into practice.

Context

Governance is going through a period of transition. At the time of the visit, the governing body was without a Chair and Vice Chair, following recent resignations. Plans are under way to recruit new governors and to co-opt a temporary, experienced governor while the governing body prepares to reconstitute, in line with statutory guidance.

Main findings

You and your senior leaders have ensured no loss of momentum in driving forward improvements since the section 5 inspection. Improving pupils' progress to good ran as a 'thread' through all discussions, during my visit. All leaders were able to identify and discuss their key priorities in depth. These tied in with the most important areas the school was asked to improve at its inspection, and with the school's overarching plan for getting to good. As a result, there is cohesiveness to leaders' work and a strong, shared sense of purpose.

A lot has been achieved in a relatively short time. The new inclusion leader, for example, has reviewed and revised the way pupils with special educational needs are supported. While much is at a very early stage, sound foundations are being laid to improve provision for these pupils. English and mathematics leaders have set clear priorities. They are taking the lead with new approaches through, for example, trialling different ideas for teaching reading and writing. Both are acutely aware that they will need to check the effectiveness of the various new initiatives they are introducing, in order to check that these are having the intended impact.

The deputy headteacher has taken on additional responsibility for the disadvantaged pupils in your school. These pupils' progress is being tracked more carefully and comparisons made between their achievement and that of non-disadvantaged pupils. This is crucial: the disadvantaged pupils who left Year 6 last year were a long way behind the pupils from non-disadvantaged backgrounds, nationally, in reading, writing and mathematics. It will be important to identify any gaps in performance for pupils currently in the school, using the national measures for non-disadvantaged pupils as a guide. Where gaps exist, particularly wide ones, leaders and teachers need to take steps to narrow them as quickly as possible. Providing a good education for disadvantaged pupils is a key priority for leaders of all schools that aspire to be judged good.

On our tour of classrooms, we saw teachers setting high expectations for the more able pupils in Years 4 and 6. The pupils were working hard on demanding tasks that were making them think about mathematical strategies that they could apply to other problems. In all classrooms, we saw evidence of your work to shift the emphasis away from what the teacher is doing to how well pupils are learning. In talking to pupils, they were able to explain the marking policy, why different colour pens are used and what they are expected to do once teachers have marked their work. We also saw examples, in most classrooms, of pupils' writing on display, as well as prompts and ideas from the teachers to support writing. All these developments show that you and your staff have taken on board the areas for improvement, from the previous inspection, and are working as one to tackle them.

The governing body acted promptly to set up the external reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium. Both reviews have taken place and changes have been made, in response to the reviews' respective recommendations. Governors have made a good start in setting up ways of finding out more about the school's work for themselves to help them provide the appropriate degree of challenge for leadership. They have drawn up a calendar of events, for example, to guide governors' visits and have assigned link roles to different governors. The school's plan for getting to good does not have clear timescales and deadlines throughout, which makes it difficult for governors to know what is happening by when, and whether the plans for moving the school to good are on track.

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 provided a range of support for leaders and governors. The external reviews have been carried out promptly and have influenced change on the part of governors and leaders. One example is the tighter approach to monitoring the progress of disadvantaged pupils, including oversight by a governor. You have ensured that any input from the local authority's advisors has been targeted appropriately, in line with the school's key priorities. Although some of the training has only taken place this term, it is clear that your leaders have benefited from and valued this support.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector