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Mrs J Squibb
Headteacher
St John's, Gosport Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Grove Road
Gosport
PO12 4JH

Dear Mrs Squibb

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St John's, Gosport Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 February 2015, 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 on 23-24 October 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 that all senior leaders are models of good practice
- review the targets set for pupils to ensure they are sufficiently aspirational
- refine the improvement plan so that it identifies different groups of pupils and the progress that is expected across all year groups
- ensure that governors make a greater contribution to the school's self-evaluation process, and undertake additional training about how to interpret published data.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I had a telephone discussion with the school's Leadership and Learning Partner from Hampshire local authority and spoke to a group of pupils. I looked at a range of documentation including a sample of pupils' workbooks and teachers' planning, and evaluated the school's improvement plan. You accompanied me on a walk round the school and we spent some time observing in lessons and looking at pupils' books.

Context

Two teachers left at the end of January 2015, and one teacher is on maternity leave. Two new teachers have been recruited; one has started working at the school and the other is due to begin after Easter. The school has reorganised some of the teaching staff to ensure that all classes are covered.

Main findings

The school has developed a suitable plan that shows how it will improve areas identified at the last inspection. The plan includes clear expectations of how progress will be measured and evidenced. The role of the governing body is included in the plan. Although targets have been set to measure the progress made by pupils, these are not always sufficiently aspirational. The plan does not make enough explicit reference to different groups of pupils. It does not ensure for example, that the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is regularly checked so that the achievement of these pupils continues to improve. The plan does not include the progress that is expected across all year groups.

Governors are in the process of linking themselves to the different areas identified for improvement. They are better placed to challenge and hold school leaders to account for example, through the work they have done in monitoring assessment and checking the marking in pupils' books. However, governors recognise that they need to become more proactive in the process of school self-evaluation; they would also benefit from further training about interpreting published data.

Middle managers have had a key role in improving the quality of teachers' planning. This has helped to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Consequently, work is becoming increasingly demanding, although this is not yet the case for all pupils. Middle managers have ensured that staff now understand what good feedback to pupils looks like, and what is expected of them as teachers when they mark pupils' work. However, whilst many teachers have improved the quality of their marking and feedback not all senior leaders are models of good practice.

The leader of the early years has benefited from visiting a school with outstanding practice. She has taken on board examples of good practice and guidance provided from the local authority. This has enabled her to significantly improve the quality and use of resources both inside and outside the Reception classroom. As a result of stronger leadership in this part of the school, staff in the early years now use a wide range of resources more effectively to support and promote children's learning and development.

There is now a clear behaviour policy in place, and older pupils in Year 6 have produced a behaviour charter for the school. These pupils have led staff meetings and are actively promoting the use of 'the language of respect' between children and adults. Children and staff have noted the improvements to behaviour in lessons and around the school. However, they know that there is still a way to go in order for behaviour to become consistently good. Middle managers and senior leaders recognise that behaviour for learning is an aspect for improvement. They are working hard to identify triggers that cause undesirable behaviour. With support from the local authority, middle managers have developed individual programs for those pupils that are particularly at risk of not doing well. This includes a closer working partnership with parents and training for staff about how to help pupils to manage their emotions. This has led to a reduction in some of the extreme behaviour the school has had to manage.

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 acted swiftly and effectively in providing the school with a good range of support. Consequently, the quality of provision in the early years is much improved. Middle leaders have a better understanding of their role; they are becoming empowered to contribute to school improvement. Behaviour at the school is improving and fewer pupils are being excluded. Governors have benefited from training provided by the local authority to enable them to monitor the work of the school more closely.

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

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector