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Mr Nicolas Philips
The Headteacher
St Peter's Church of England Primary School
Fabians Way
Henfield
West Sussex
BN5 9PU

Dear Mr Philips

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Peter's Church of England 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 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:

- make sure lessons and tasks are well planned to meet the needs of more able pupils
- improve teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics, so that misunderstandings are tackled quickly.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, other leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken

since the last inspection. I visited classes with you and the deputy headteacher, looked at work in pupils' books and reviewed school documentation.

Main findings

You have tackled the areas for improvement, including those I identified as urgent, with drive and focus. There is now a whole-school understanding about what needs to be done to ensure the school becomes good. This is supported well by the school's new 'core values', one of which is 'always aiming high'. The school improvement plan now shows clearly what actions need to be taken and when, so governors are able to hold you to account more easily.

Governors are much clearer about what needs to be done to improve the school. They can explain in detail what has changed since September and are rightly confident that leaders' checks on teaching and achievement are well-timed and accurate. Governors recently worked with teachers to understand more about the new system of marking and feedback. This is a good example of the way that they are now obtaining their own evidence to support information given by the school.

Middle leaders are much more effective. They describe their previous roles as being 'pastoral'; now they have rightly taken on responsibility for holding people to account, which they are beginning to do well. In line with the new monitoring schedule, they are carrying out effective checks on teaching, work in books and pupils' progress. Although they are still developing their skills in these areas, they are now providing useful support for you.

There are improvements in teaching across the school. Teachers are now clear about what pupils need to learn and are planning more relevant and interesting activities to help develop their understanding. In each classroom we visited, it was immediately apparent what the lesson was about and tasks were linked more closely to the learning. Although teachers are planning a range of activities to meet the needs of different pupils, opportunities are still being missed for more-able pupils to achieve as much as they can.

Teaching of writing is improving. All teachers are following the school's chosen scheme. Writing is being taught more effectively in sequences of lessons and all pupils now have more opportunities to write longer pieces of work. The school's information on progress shows that pupils are making accelerated progress in this area.

The teaching of mathematics is not developing as well. We saw several lessons where teachers identified what pupils needed to learn, but we frequently saw pupils listening to the teacher when they already knew what to do and were ready to start work. In some lessons we also observed some misunderstandings which were not corrected by teachers, so pupils were confused about what they were being taught.

Processes for collecting and checking information about pupils' progress are much more rigorous. It is positive that teachers are now responsible for information about their own pupils' progress. They are beginning to identify when pupils are not learning enough and are listening to sensible advice from leaders about what action to take. Leaders and governors are checking progress more frequently and are beginning to be more ambitious for what pupils can achieve.

Pupils are much clearer about how to improve their work. All teachers are using the new system of marking more effectively to identify pupils' next steps. The targets in English and mathematics are also more useful in helping pupils to know what they need to learn next. All the pupils I spoke to could tell me their targets and were keen to show me how they knew they were improving. You are sensibly carrying out regular checks to make sure these processes become embedded.

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

Since my visit in September the local authority has provided useful and appropriate support. The school advisor has supported your work to tackle the areas for urgent action identified in my previous letter. She is confident that the school is well-positioned to continue the journey of improvement; the authority plans to reduce its support from now on.

You have sensibly engaged with the local teaching school, St Lawrence Primary, as part of a teaching alliance. This support has been invaluable in providing development for leaders, governors and teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Louise Adams
Her Majesty's Inspector