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10 March 2015

Mr Brian McGregor
Headteacher
Woodchurch CofE Primary School
Church Lane
Woodchurch
Wirral
Merseyside
CH49 7LS

Dear Mr McGregor

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodchurch CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 March 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, as headteacher, other senior leaders and those in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school's work. I also met with representatives of the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority (LA.) A range of documents related to various aspects of the school's work was considered, for example records of the monitoring of teaching and learning and the school's most recent surveys of the views of parents, carers and pupils, about the school. In addition I looked at information held by the school concerning pupils' progress. Brief joint visits were made with you to a number of classes across the school, and a small sample of written work from a range of year groups and abilities was scrutinised. I perused minutes of meetings of the Governing Body and checked the single central record, finding it to meet requirements.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection three teachers have left the school and three teachers have been appointed. A new special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) was appointed in September 2014.

Main findings

You and your senior and other leaders, together with governors, have all worked energetically and with great determination over the last two years to set a clear direction for the school's improvement. This has resulted in strong progress in tackling the recommendations from the last Section 5 inspection. This attests to the school's capacity for further improvement. Middle leaders are making an increasingly confident and valuable contribution to the school's improvement, because of the high-quality training they receive from senior leaders and through strong external links with the local authority.

Governance has strengthened significantly since my last visit. Governors have taken heed of the key messages from the review of their own practice. In light of these, structural changes, for example, to committee meetings, have already improved governors' ability to provide a strong challenge to the school. They are knowledgeable and highly committed and can point to curricular changes that they have very actively championed. Governors' knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development is deep, because they are frequent visitors to the school and take a strong interest in teachers' work in different subjects for example, in mathematics. Governors are thinking with increasing foresight about the further sustainable improvement of the school. Inspection evidence shows the high level of challenge with which governors are able to hold the school to account as a result.

As headteacher, you have given very strong support to the development of the Early Years environment, leading to a very positive impact on pupils' learning which continues through Key Stage 1. The impact of the robust systems noted on my last inspection, for identifying underperformance amongst pupils and staff has begun to be evident, for instance in unvalidated national information on pupils' assessment in the 2014 national tests.

In reading at Key Stage 2, pupils' achievement exceeded the national average, and in writing and mathematics pupils' progress was close to it. Gaps in the progress of some groups narrowed. However the school is aware that the proportion of pupils who exceed expected progress needs to speed up in both English and mathematics.

The progress of pupils currently in the school continues to improve, but there are inconsistencies between some year groups and subjects. Senior leaders are working hard to eradicate these.

The school has placed a strong emphasis on the rigorous checking of the quality of teaching. Inspection evidence from their records of monitoring the quality of teaching over time confirms this. Marking continues to be regular and conscientious and, in general, helps pupils to move their learning forward. There are occasional lapses when feedback to pupils on how to improve their work is not specific enough and checks are not always made to ensure that pupils follow up advice given by their teachers.

Pupils conducted themselves extremely well during the inspection, in and around the school. There was no evidence of disruptive behaviour and pupils play their part in keeping the school site tidy and free of litter. Pupils are smartly dressed and speak politely and confidently with their teachers, with each other and with visiting adults. Their informal communication skills are impressive, given the deficits with which many enter the school.

The school's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in the development of pupils' personal skills as they move up through the school. These attributes result in very positive learning attitudes. Pupils have good opportunities to meet pupils from a wider range of backgrounds and faiths than their own, through links with other more diverse local schools. This interaction enables all the pupils involved to share and reflect on their learning experiences and values in their respective schools.

The school has made great efforts to engage parents more actively in their children's learning. For example, increasing numbers of parents now volunteer to help pupils with their reading in school. A recent survey of the views of parents, carers and pupils about the school shows that they are very positive about the improvements senior leaders and governors have made over the last two years.

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 school takes full advantage of the strong support afforded them by the LA. The services of a consultant have been organised to support senior leadership and management. Middle leaders, including those acting in senior roles, have also benefited from high-quality training from the LA in leadership and management. The school has developed strong links with local schools to provide staff with opportunities to carry out joint moderation of pupils' work and quality assurance processes. The school is increasingly active in sharing the good practice which is now established in their own school with others within the LA.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- Diocese – for voluntary aided