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15 June 2015

Mrs L Griffiths  
Executive Headteacher  
Picklenash Junior School  
Ross Road  
Newent  
GL18 1BG

Dear Mrs Griffiths

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Picklenash Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 June 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 and the executive deputy headteacher 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. Please pass my thanks on to the pupils, teachers, other staff and governors I met during my visit.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection in February 2013 the school was also judged to require improvement.

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 build on the good progress made in improving teaching to ensure that all teachers:

- use the most up-to-date information on pupils' progress to match work more closely to the needs of individual pupils
- check that pupils' response to their marking leads to improvements in their work
- use their questioning to include all pupils.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher and executive deputy headteacher, the Chair and two other members of the Governing

Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The inspector observed all of the classes in the school with the executive head and deputy, looked at pupils' work and talked to them about it. The inspector also talked to other pupils during break time. The school's raising achievement and improvement plans were evaluated. The school's information on pupils' current achievement and expectations for the end of Year 6 were discussed.

## **Context**

Picklenash Junior School is part of the Federation of Newent Schools with Glebe Infant School, which is on the same site. The junior school is run by the headteacher of the infant school who acts as the executive headteacher of the two federated schools. She is supported by the executive deputy headteacher, also from the infant school. The subject leaders, also mainly from the infant school, work across both infant and junior schools. There is one governing body for both schools.

Following a period of significant disruption, the school now has a full set of class teachers. Currently, of the six classes in the school, three are taught by newly qualified teachers, one by a teacher in her second year of teaching and two by more experienced teachers.

Recently, all children who complete Year 2 in the infant school join the junior school at the start of Year 3. However, the school has a high level of mobility with many other pupils joining the school at times other than at the start of Year 3.

## **Main findings**

Since the most recent inspection, senior leaders have taken actions that have already improved the quality of teaching. This has been helped by establishing a stable team of teachers who all have a very clear idea about what needs to be done and have the skills to make the improvements required. The raising achievement plan clearly identified what needed to be done following the inspection. The plan is reviewed frequently with the local authority and modified as necessary. Leaders have already made good progress in implementing all of the actions identified. The Governing Body also frequently reviews progress against the plan and holds the executive headteacher to account very well. Leaders make effective use of the expertise across both schools; for example, in providing high-quality leadership of teaching by the executive deputy head and good subject leadership.

The head and deputy undertake rigorous and frequent checks of pupils' progress and of the quality of teaching. All teachers work well together to support each other and share good practice. Teachers' professional development is focused well on meeting the objectives in the raising achievement plan. As a result of the improvements made by the executive headteacher and other senior leaders, pupils who enter the school at the start of Year 3 do well. Many of the pupils who join the school at other times have linguistic, medical, emotional and/or social needs that

have limited their achievement. The school makes excellent use of a full-time 'pastoral support assistant' to work with these pupils to enable them to make good progress, even though they may not achieve the national expectations at the end of Year 6. The work seen in pupils' books shows that senior leaders' evaluations of pupils' current achievement are accurate.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour in lessons and these are mostly achieved. Occasionally, teachers do not make enough use of their most recent information on each pupils' progress to make sure all are challenged sufficiently. Pupils' reading, writing and mathematics have all improved since the inspection. These improvements are helped by the school's very clear and challenging set of 'non-negotiables' which set clear expectations for what each year group will achieve and the skills pupils will develop.

Teachers mark pupils' work frequently and provide them with good feedback so that, most of the time, pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve. Pupils respond well by correcting their work, re-drafting or doing an additional piece of work to show deeper understanding. Teachers often use challenging questions when marking work to prompt pupils to think more deeply or apply their skills to another situation. Just occasionally, pupils are not clear what the question expects them to do. The work in pupils' books shows that the marking and pupils' response to this leads to them making more progress. However, not all teachers check the longer-term impact of their marking.

All teachers use questioning extensively to draw ideas from pupils, to check their understanding and develop deeper thinking. However, most tend to use a 'hands up' approach and consequently a small number of pupils are not fully involved. Excellent use is made of the 'steps to success' for each lesson and activity. Pupils are clear about these and how to show that they have been achieved. They are used extremely well by pupils to evaluate their own work and to check and discuss other pupils' work, and by the teacher in reviewing the lesson with the class and/or smaller groups.

A really good example of how well senior leaders introduce new ideas and how quickly teachers acquire the skills and use them effectively is the very recent introduction of 'cold and hot writing'. Introduced on the Monday of the inspection week, by Friday pupils were talking with great confidence about the process and about how their writing had improved. The evidence for this was clear in their work.

Pupils' behave very well in lessons and around the school. It is a safe, calm and harmonious place and pupils make very good use of the extensive grounds and facilities during break and lunch times. Pupils of different ages play well together. Those who joined the school late are very well integrated.

Governors have a deep and perceptive understanding of all aspects of the school. While they already have a good balance of skills, they still make use of the local

authority training to refine and improve these regularly. They use their own evaluations and reviews to hold the senior leaders to account well. Governors frequently review progress against the raising achievement plan at sub-committee and full governing body level, led well by the governor with specific responsibility for this. They evaluate spending on, for example, teaching resources through the impact on pupils' progress. Their role across the federation of the infant and junior schools gives them a good depth of understanding of the progress of those pupils who join the school late. As a consequence, they carefully analyse achievement data with a focus on the progress of different pupils.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority is now showing a greater sense of urgency and is supporting the school, including governors, well. The local authority monitoring officer visits the school regularly to check progress against the raising achievement plan. The school also works well with several others to ensure the accuracy of teachers' assessments of the quality of pupils' work.

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

Yours sincerely

James Sage

**Her Majesty's Inspector**