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Mr David Gumbrell
Headteacher
Long Ditton St Mary's CofE (Aided) Junior School
Sugden Road
Surbiton
KT7 0AD

Dear Mr Gumbrell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Long Ditton St Mary's CofE (Aided) Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 2 July 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 in March 2015. 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:

- strengthen school improvement plans to make it clear what will happen, by when, how progress will be checked and impact evaluated
- clarify the responsibilities for leading, monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions in all of the school's plans, including the role of the governing body
- improve leaders' monitoring of teaching and pupils' work, ensuring a sharp, in-depth focus on evaluating the learning of different groups, particularly the more able and disadvantaged pupils and those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, middle leaders, two governors and a representative from Babcock 4S, which provides consultancy

services on behalf of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. You took me on a tour of the school and I visited each class. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school's improvement plans.

Main findings

You and your leadership team are working diligently to bring about necessary improvements. You have rightly concentrated on improving the quality of teaching and learning and, following the inspection, you issued clear expectations for all staff and pupils. These higher expectations are beginning to have a positive impact on the behaviour and progress of pupils. During my visits to classrooms, the atmosphere was purposeful and pupils were appropriately engaged in a range of learning activities.

You are beginning to use a wider range of approaches to check that teaching is good enough and have carried out joint lesson observations with external partners to improve your practice. You know where teaching is stronger and where it needs to be better. Plans are being put into place to improve the levels of support and challenge for teachers and these are beginning to have a positive impact.

You have made a useful start on developing the skills of middle leaders. Together with a consultant from Babcock 4S, your middle leader with responsibility for literacy analysed weaknesses in writing and this provided a base for staff development. The middle leader subsequently visited another school which helped to improve her understanding of how to lead improvements in writing throughout the school. As a result, changes to lesson planning now offer pupils more time to respond to teachers' written feedback in their books. Pupils have more time to develop different forms of writing so practise and deepen their skills. School data shows that pupils in Year 6 are on course for improved results in writing in 2015. Your middle leader with responsibility for numeracy has benefited from working with another consultant from Babcock 4S to identify weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics. Steps have been taken to increase the level of problem solving during lessons and work in books shows that this is taking place.

You are now recording incidents of poor behaviour and have identified pupils who repeatedly exhibit poor behaviour. You have started to address this, although it is not clear how you are going to analyse the effectiveness of leaders' actions.

Leaders have strengthened the rigour of meetings held to review pupils' achievement. Teachers and leaders assess how well pupils are progressing in reading, writing and mathematics. When pupils are identified as falling behind, actions are taken to meet their needs and data show that in many cases these pupils are now back on track to make the progress expected. Pupils who are not on track to make better progress are not identified and this low level of expectation needs to be rapidly addressed.

Although you have taken appropriate action to tackle the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report, robust systems to evaluate the impact of your actions are not in place. Leaders' monitoring of pupils' work lacks detailed analysis. Lesson observations highlight some helpful pointers as to how teaching can be improved but too little consideration is given to the quality of pupils' learning and whether their progress in lessons, and over time, is good enough. Leaders are not examining, as a matter of routine, whether there are any differences in learning for more able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. School leaders have recently shared progress data for different groups of pupils and this now forms a base against which improvements can be measured.

The school's improvement plan lacks clarity and detail. It does not show well enough how actions are expected to improve the outcomes for pupils. The plans lack specific targets for pupils' progress and clear timelines so that leaders can check that weaker areas are improving quickly. Plans also require more detail about who will monitor and evaluate the actions undertaken. The governors' role in evaluating the impact of the school improvement plan is not clear enough.

The recommended reviews of governance and the use of the pupil premium have recently taken place. The governing body have waited for the review of governance before taking significant action and, as a result, they have been slow to respond to the areas for improvement identified by the inspection. Governors are now asking you for more information about pupil achievement but have not been involved in monitoring and evaluating the school improvement plans. It is not clear how the governors will hold school leaders to account for the improvements needed.

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 school receives effective support from consultants from Babcock 4S. Their accurate reviews provide you with helpful recommendations. Senior and middle leaders are developing their skills and confidence through working alongside Babcock4S representatives in school. You, as headteacher, are held to account through regular meetings with Babcock4S to review a range of performance indicators, including those related to pupil progress and the quality of teaching. You have also benefitted from support and challenge from a local leader of education.

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

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector