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Mrs G Standing
Headteacher
Petworth CofE Primary School
South Grove
Petworth
West Sussex
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Dear Mrs Standing

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Petworth CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 November 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 June 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, two members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, two teachers and a group of pupils, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's action plan and reviewed the minutes of a committee of the governing body. I made brief visits to all classes and the lunch hall to see the school in action.

Context

Since the inspection in June 2015, the deputy headteacher remains on maternity leave. The class teacher for Years 4 and 5 is due to leave at the end of term. The

replacement teacher for this class will also take on the role of deputy headteacher, on a temporary basis. New teachers have joined the school: a temporary teacher in Year 1 and a permanent teacher in Year 2. The Year 3 class is covered by two permanent part-time teachers; one of these teachers also teaches in Year 6 one day a week. A temporary teacher teaches in Year 6 for the remaining four days a week. A new headteacher has been appointed to start in January 2016, following your retirement in December 2015.

Main findings

Following the inspection in June 2015, you started to tackle many of the areas identified for improvement. However, your capacity is limited because you currently have no other senior or middle leaders to support you in taking important developments forward. Consequently, progress is too slow.

Your action plan generally focuses on the right key issues. Nevertheless, you accept that it still does not show clearly enough what you are aiming for; this weakness was noted by inspectors in June 2015. As a result, the plan is not a useful tool for you and the governing body to measure progress or check success.

It is disappointing that the recommended external review of the school's use of the pupil premium has not yet taken place. In addition, your action plan does not focus sharply enough on helping disadvantaged pupils to do as well as they should. This is a serious omission, which you know you need to address.

You have rightly given greater priority to speeding up the learning of pupils who did not make enough progress last year, by reorganising how teachers support them in class. Pupils now get better support in their own classroom, rather than being withdrawn from lessons. Teachers say that this new approach provides more opportunities for pupils to practise key skills. However, teachers have not set precise targets to show what pupils are expected to achieve, which makes it hard for staff to evaluate the impact of this work. Your new system to check how well pupils are making progress towards end-of-year expectations is not yet fully in place. You intend that teachers will ultimately use this information to help plan work at the right level of challenge but it is too soon to assess how useful this is.

At the start of the year, you set out clear expectations about the standard of presentation in pupils' books. This is helping pupils to improve their work, which is now set out more neatly. You also revisited the school's marking and feedback policy. You check carefully to make sure all teachers follow this policy correctly; there are some examples of useful feedback to help pupils improve. Pupils say that the regular time allocated for them to read comments and make corrections is useful. Nonetheless, in many classes, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons remain too low. Pupils lose focus and get distracted when their work lacks challenge. This holds learning back. Pupils are given opportunities to

produce longer pieces of writing, but teachers do not ensure pupils always use their time well or make the progress they should.

At lunchtime, your new systems to improve behaviour are proving effective. Pupils now have allocated dining places. Older pupils have risen well to the challenge of acting as good role models for the younger pupils on their table. In addition, the new scheme of lunchtime rewards is working well. Pupils say they are motivated to speak quietly and behave well because 'everyone wants a golden ticket'.

Governors have a good understanding of the day-to-day life of the school because they visit regularly. The minutes of committee meetings indicate governors ask sensible questions about pupils' progress. However, they accept too readily the excuses given by leaders when pupils do not do as well as they should. The external review of governance has not yet taken place, which is holding back the development of the governing body. Governors recognise that there is still much work to be done for the school to be judged good at its next inspection.

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's attempts to bolster the school's leadership for the autumn term, through secondment of a deputy headteacher, sadly failed. A consultant headteacher has provided limited help. Your local authority adviser, aware you had no senior leaders to support you, also offered some support. However, a robust action plan is still not in place. Furthermore, the local authority has not pressed for rapid reviews of governance and pupil premium funding, which means the school has not made the progress it should in tackling these areas.

The local authority's support to improve the quality of teaching has been more effective. Individual teachers report that advisers help them to improve their practice, and they have greater confidence as a result. Visits with advisers to other schools have enabled teachers to see what works well elsewhere and try out new ideas in their own class. It is important that you develop further links with good and outstanding schools, so more teachers benefit from the good practice they share.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex and the Diocese of Chichester. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Gard
Her Majesty's Inspector