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Mark Thrower  
Headteacher  
Arnold Seely Church of England Primary School  
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Dear Mr Thrower

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Arnold Seely Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 19 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. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in June 2015, 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 in order to become a good school. Leaders should take further steps to:

- ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop skills in solving open-ended, investigative mathematical problems
- ensure that staff learn from each other so that that pupils in all classes consistently receive high-quality advice on how to improve their work.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, subject leaders for both English and mathematics, a group of pupils, a member of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. I held a telephone conversation with the Deputy Director of Education for the Nottingham and Southwell Diocese. I evaluated the school improvement plan and undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work with you. We also toured the school to see learning taking place in different classes.

## **Main findings**

With the support of the local authority, you and the governing body have written an effective plan to deal with all the key areas for improvement identified at your last inspection. This plan has a range of sensible actions and makes it clear who will undertake these, and when and how each action will be checked to ensure that it is effective. The steps that you have taken already have begun to improve teaching and leadership considerably.

In addition to ensuring that a member of staff coordinates the provision for those pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs, two teachers have now taken on the subject leadership for English and mathematics. This has allowed you time to focus on driving school improvement in, for example, the agreement of an important new school system for assessing and tracking pupils' progress.

Although new to their role, the subject leaders for English and mathematics have wasted no time in becoming familiar with the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects, along with what they need to do first. Both teachers have examined samples of pupils' work and have begun a programme of visiting classes to check that better teaching is taking place. As headteacher, you have wisely ensured that improvements in mathematics take the highest priority because this is where pupils currently achieve least well. Because of this, the subject leader for mathematics has met with a leader from Willow Farm Primary School, a local school where pupils make good progress, and has gained an effective understanding of her role. The two leaders have worked together to look at pupils' books at your school and to check the progress of your pupils' work. Your new subject leader has also written a calculation policy with staff so that mathematics teaching will become more consistent across the school. Staff are following this well. The subject leader for English has plans for similar visits shortly and has also undertaken some important initial work in monitoring the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make).

Pupils are now receiving regular opportunities to use and apply their skills in mathematics through solving problems. Many of the pupils whom we saw on our tour of the school were working hard on these and say that they enjoy doing more of them. Pupils' books that I looked at with you confirm that opportunities for problem-solving are improving pupils' abilities in mathematics. However, you agree that currently, these activities are largely based on narrower, word-based challenges. Pupils do not yet receive sufficient open-ended, investigative problems that will allow pupils to explain their reasoning, reflect on their work and increase their efficiency.

Pupils now have greater opportunities to write at length and have begun new exercise books to record over time their skills in extended writing. In addition, pupils now have a regular 'whole-school' writing day, when every pupil will write on a single theme. The subject leader for English has ensured that a 'progression wall' in the hall shows pupils examples of how their classmates in different year groups write as they get older. Pupils say that this is helpful and are keen to have their own work exhibited there.

A revised planning system is also in place, which includes more opportunities for the most-able pupils to be given challenging work. A new system of targets is helping teachers to ensure that expectations are rising and that pupils know what they are aiming for. Pupils that I met during my visit say that the work they are given is mostly challenging, but not always. They say that this is particularly the case in mathematics. Here, they say, they are often ready to move on to the most difficult work before they are allowed to do so. You have plans for your subject leader to visit Willow Farm Primary again to see how your staff can further challenge your most-able pupils. You are clear that all of them must receive sufficient work that really makes them think hard.

Your staff have begun a new system of marking pupils' work. This is working increasingly well. Pupils I met told me that they all understand how it works and find it helpful in giving them advice. Pupils' books show that, in some classes, marking is currently better than in others. Where marking is best, it provides useful next steps for pupils that they can apply to other areas of their work. When this happens, pupils take note of it and their rate of progress is faster. In some years, marking remains focused largely on simply correcting pupils' errors. When this is the case, pupils make slower progress because they are not shown exactly what area to improve next. You agree that marking needs further improvement so that all pupils receive the consistently high-quality advice they need to make good progress.

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 has provided considerable support to the school since its inspection. The adviser for Nottinghamshire has undertaken joint observations with you to check the quality of teaching, checking pupils' work, holding discussions with you regarding pupil progress and agreeing the action necessary to ensure that Arnold Seely becomes a good school as quickly as possible. Governors have noted, in particular, the positive impact of the partnership that the local authority has brokered with Willow Farm Primary School. They agree that this has helped to give your new subject leaders clear direction about their roles and is helping to raise expectations for teaching in their subjects. The deputy director of the diocese has also visited the school to see learning taking place in classrooms and to check the progress in pupils' books. This has helped you to confirm your own view of the strengths of the school and what needs to be improved next.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Nottinghamshire and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Nottingham and Southwell.

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**