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Ms Jane Ransome
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Ransome

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Woodford Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 November 2015 I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in February 2015. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and the monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire and Peterborough Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Derek Myers
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2015

- Raise achievement and increase the amount of teaching that is good or better by:
 - increasing the proportion of pupils who make more than expected progress in reading, writing, and mathematics at Key Stage 1 and 2 so that it is at least in line with schools nationally
 - increasing the proportion of children who make good progress in the early years, thus reducing the wide variations in attainment at the end of the Reception Year
 - making sure that teachers always communicate high expectations to pupils and set tasks that provide the right level of challenge
 - providing enough guidance in lessons so that pupils are clear about what they are meant to do and how to succeed
 - making the indoor and outdoor areas more stimulating in the early years so that they contribute more effectively to children's development in all areas of learning
 - making sure that all activities in the early years, including for Nursery-aged children, provide opportunities for deep learning and promote children's language, speaking and listening, and thinking skills.
- Strengthen leadership and management and increase the rate of improvement by:
 - developing the leadership skills of teachers with responsibility for specific areas of the school's work, including subjects, so that they contribute fully to raising achievement and improving teaching
 - sharpening the way staff in the early years use assessment information to check children's progress, to identify gaps in their learning and to pin point the next steps in their development.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 26 November 2015

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, the lead teachers for English and mathematics, and a member of the governing body. The inspector also spoke to the local authority senior school improvement manager. The inspector and headteacher visited classrooms to see the learning that was taking place and they looked at some writing and mathematics books. They also reviewed pupils' performance information for 2015 and for pupils currently at the school. The inspector reviewed the school improvement plan and local authority monitoring reports. In addition, the inspector also checked the single central record and reviewed a range of pupils' assessment data, minutes of meetings and monitoring records. Prior to the inspection, the inspector reviewed previous inspection reports, the school website, published data and information from Parent View.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection, school leaders and governors appointed two experienced teachers to work in Years 3/4 and Years 5/6, respectively. They are also the lead teacher for English and the lead teacher for mathematics. A third teacher joined the school in September to provide cover for a teacher taking maternity leave. The headteacher and governors are in the process of recruiting another teacher for the school to replace the teacher currently on maternity leave who has chosen not to return. The teacher covering the maternity leave will leave to have a baby in February. The headteacher and governors expect to appoint someone from the second half of the spring term at the latest. Leaders have also appointed a part-time family support worker (0.2 fte) to support families and to improve attendance. A member of the governing body has resigned and has yet to be replaced.

There has been no change to the school's status but the governors are considering joining a multi-academy trust.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Leaders and governors are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation. A key action was the appointment of two experienced teachers to work in Key Stage 2 and to lead English and mathematics throughout the school. They are both enthusiastic and committed, and are providing the headteacher with effective support. As a result, the pace of improvement has increased.

The governing body have established a 'senior committee', with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, to drive school improvement and to rigorously evaluate the impact of the plan on standards of teaching and pupils' outcomes. The local authority supports the governing body in the effective implementation of the

improvement plan by undertaking regular and rigorous monitoring visits which it then reports on to the headteacher and governors.

Governors also conduct some monitoring directly. However, this has been limited and governors should look for opportunities to monitor alongside school leaders.

Since the last visit, the headteacher and her lead teachers have introduced a whole-school approach to learning and reviewed the approach to behaviour management. They have also reviewed target setting, the use of learning objectives and the school's approach to marking and feedback. As a result, pupils are clear about what it is they have to do and the level of challenge they are working at. Teachers discuss this with pupils and move them onto more challenging tasks appropriately. There is greater consistency across the school in how teachers talk to pupils and provide them with help and guidance.

Teachers are more aware of their accountability for pupils' outcomes than previously. The headteacher has raised staff's expectations of pupils and themselves. She has done this by evaluating pupils' performance information and identifying those pupils who are not making sufficient progress. Consequently, the headteacher has a good understanding of each pupil and is able to hold teachers to account for pupils' performance. She and the deputy headteacher, the English or mathematics leads then work with teachers to implement strategies and provide support so that pupils can catch up.

Pupils' progress and the school areas for improvement inform teachers' performance management targets. This exemplifies the collective responsibility to improve teaching and learning. The governing body have not fulfilled their statutory duty for the headteacher's performance management.

The headteacher and governors have ensured that the early years learning environment has improved. They have extended the outside area and improved the range of resources available. The headteacher and the early years leader have more clearly defined the different areas within early years, including opportunities for reading, writing and display in the outside area. Leaders have reviewed the curriculum and identified opportunities for language development. The headteacher has, with the local authority, provided the early years staff with training and opportunities to visit good and outstanding early years provision. The headteacher and early years leader have also developed their knowledge, understanding and application of assessment data.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The headteacher and teachers are more confident in their assessments of pupils and they have a keener understanding of the barriers to pupils' learning and how to overcome them.

- Pupils' performance information informs teachers' planning. Teachers communicate high expectations to the pupils verbally and as learning objectives on the board. Teachers' guidance to pupils on what to do next and how to succeed is clearly explained to the pupils and recorded. Consequently, pupils have a better understanding of what is expected of them in lessons, and engage in their learning. Overall behaviour for learning has improved: for example, pupils respond well to guidance from teachers and are able to explain how they have to respond to teachers' marking.
- The new English and mathematics lead teachers are supporting the headteacher to raise standards of teaching. They have provided training and support for colleagues and bring significant experience to the roles.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Governors have begun to monitor the implementation of the school improvement plan, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress more effectively since the last inspection. However, they are not sufficiently involved in monitoring and are not visible in school.
- Improvement was slow in the summer term because of the quality of staff and it has picked up since the appointment of the three new teachers. This is understandable. However, the pace of improvement now needs to quicken and to have an impact on pupils' progress in all key stages.
- The governing body has not undertaken the headteacher's performance management since 2013/14. This undermines the headteacher's use of performance management to improve standards.

External support

The local authority has provided good support to the school since the last inspection. The regular monitoring visits provide the headteacher and governors with an effective check on the work they are doing to address the areas for improvement. The support and challenge the local authority officers provide for the headteacher is clearly valued by her and has enabled her to lead the school through this challenging period. The local authority has also provided staff and governors with training and professional development which has enabled them to improve their practice such as developing the early years learning environment.