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Matthew Parslow-Williams  
Headteacher  
Hethersett VC Junior School  
22 Queen's Road  
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Norfolk  
NR9 3DB

Dear Mr Parslow-Williams

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hethersett VC Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 22 January 2016, 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.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement in June 2015. It was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the section 5 inspection in order to become a good school. The school should take further action to:

- focus more closely on the support provided for disadvantaged pupils in order to help them catch up more quickly with their peers
- review the use of success criteria used in lessons to ensure that all pupils are challenged sufficiently
- share pupils' work from all classes with teachers and support staff in order to promote progression and eradicate remaining inconsistencies.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, two assistant headteachers and the Chair of the Governing Body. I discussed the school with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the London Leadership Strategy, which is supporting the school. I met with a group of pupils representing all year groups. I visited all classes with you to observe pupils and staff at work. In addition, I checked safeguarding documentation, evaluated the school's self-evaluation and action plan and analysed information about pupils' progress.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, three new teachers have joined the school. In November, the school received a Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

## **Main findings**

Since the inspection, you have:

- introduced a more comprehensive system for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- restructured leadership roles and responsibilities and increased opportunities for the assistant headteachers to lead improvements in the classroom
- increased methods of tracking the progress made by pupils and the opportunities for teachers, leaders and governors to make changes as a result
- linked the achievement of pupils more closely to the management of staff performance, training and development.

The section 5 inspection in June 2015 recognised your impact as headteacher since joining the school the previous year. You have built on the feedback provided to improve aspects of the school that were not consistently good at the time of the inspection. Governors, parents and carers, pupils and staff are supportive of the actions taken. The school is a positive place of work for pupils and staff, supported by a strong Christian ethos. This was reflected at the SIAMS inspection in November.

You have increased opportunities for the two assistant headteachers to contribute to improvements across the school. Their part-time work alongside teachers is enabling them to make the good practice evident in their own classes more widespread. This is increasingly evident in pupils' work across the school in English and mathematics. Pupils' improved progress since September is the norm. However, inconsistencies remain. In particular, pupils' topic books show a more mixed picture, including some missed opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills in the context of other subjects. Art, design and technology work displayed

around the school and in sketchbooks shows that pupils achieve well when expectations are consistently high and are explained clearly.

Teachers' use of success criteria with pupils varies widely. Work in lessons and pupils' books indicates that staff are effective in helping pupils understand how their skills and knowledge progress to the next stage of their learning. However, giving pupils too many opportunities to choose their level of work results in unchallenging work for some pupils. This is reflected in work that pupils find too easy and progress information that shows a below-average proportion making better than expected progress. Your monitoring is rightly focused on a wide range of evidence to ensure that the school builds on the higher standards pupils attained in mathematics and writing last year. This includes meetings with groups of pupils to discuss 'challenge' and with staff to discuss the outcomes of work scrutiny, lesson observations and analysis of progress information. You have developed a comprehensive picture of strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment.

Pupils receive helpful feedback from staff. This includes guidance on corrections required to raise the standard of their work. More pupils amend their work than at the time of the inspection because you have set time aside for this purpose. This includes correcting spelling, punctuation and handwriting, which is helping to improve the accuracy and presentation of their work. There is still some untidy work in books. Limited practice with a pen is a contributory factor. However, pupils and staff are trying hard to refine pupils' handwriting. Well-presented displays are helping to promote pupils' pride in their work. High-quality presentation by some Year 6 pupils sets an example to younger pupils at the school. This complements other opportunities pupils are given to develop leadership roles and responsibilities.

A self-review has increased the impact of the governing body. For example, governors are more closely involved in finding out about the school for themselves in order to challenge leaders, and they know how their support and expertise can be best used. For example, their involvement in reviews of music and geography provision have informed the work of the curriculum committee. However, although governors' roles include a champion for disadvantaged pupils, this aspect of the school's improvement plan requires further detail, particularly in relation to targets for closing gaps between their performance and that of pupils nationally. A recent visit to a school where support for disadvantaged pupils has proved highly effective shows how leaders and governors are using external links to inform your improvement strategy.

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

## **External support**

The local authority provides effective support. This includes leadership development with the assistant headteachers, governor support, and guidance with regard to assessments of pupils. Network meetings enable leaders at all levels to learn from good practice in other schools. In addition, support from a headteacher experienced in the London Leadership Strategy is helping to raise expectations of pupils and maximise the resources available. This has contributed to a more systematic approach to supporting disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Collaborative work to develop teachers' questioning skills is starting to take effect.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Department for Education and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**