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Mrs Lin Griffiths  
Executive Headteacher  
Picklenash Junior School  
Ross Road  
Newent  
Gloucestershire  
GL18 1BG

Dear Mrs Griffiths

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Picklenash Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 18 March 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 since the most recent section 5 inspection. Please also pass my thanks on to your staff and governors, and particularly to your pupils.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection, 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.

As a result of the strong leadership and actions taken by the executive headteacher and other senior leaders since the first monitoring visit in June 2015, the quality of teaching has improved further and this is beginning to raise pupils' achievement. Good progress is being made against the school's action plan and the steps set out by the local authority. All teachers and other adults provide excellent 'wrap-around care' for the many young people in the school whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. To sustain the improvements in pupils' achievement, the school's leaders should take action to make sure that this attention to individual pupils' needs extends to closely monitoring their learning.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, executive deputy headteacher, the school's special educational needs coordinator, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's self-evaluation and improvement plan were evaluated. The inspector, accompanied by the executive headteacher and deputy, visited lessons across all year groups. In these lessons, the inspector looked at pupils' work and talked with them about it. The information gathered from these visits was compared with the school leaders' evaluation of how well pupils are currently doing. The inspector also observed an assembly and held informal discussions with pupils at lunchtime.

## **Context**

Picklenash Junior School is part of the Federation of Newent Schools with Glebe Infant School, which is on the same site. The junior school is run by the headteacher of the infant school who acts as the executive headteacher of the two federated schools. She is supported by the executive deputy headteacher, also from the infant school. There is one governing body for both schools.

Currently, there are six classes in the school: three mixed Year 3/4 and three mixed Year 5/6 classes. Half the classes are taught by recently qualified teachers.

Almost all the children who complete Year 2 in the infant school join the junior school at the start of Year 3. However, the school has a very high level of mobility with many other pupils joining the school at times other than at the start of Year 3. This includes one third of the 43 pupils currently in Year 6. One in four of the pupils in Year 6 has special education needs or disability, almost one third are from disadvantaged backgrounds, four entered the school in Years 5 or 6 with no spoken English and several others have complex needs.

## **Main findings**

- The school has made further progress since the first monitoring visit in June 2015. At that time, three of the six class teachers were still in their first year of teaching. All have gained confidence, are more relaxed and have more classroom presence and authority.
- All six classrooms are lively and vibrant, and extremely pleasant places in which to learn. Pupils clearly enjoy their learning and behave exceptionally well. They are a delight to talk to and take pleasure in showing off their work, including some excellent displays on classroom walls. Pupils attend regularly and like coming to school.

- It is clear from their work that those pupils who joined this junior school at the start of Year 3 make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Those who join at other times also make good progress from their very different starting points, and taking account of their sometimes complex individual needs. However, largely because of the high mobility, the progress measures overall by the end of Year 6 are below national expectations.
- Overall, teachers mostly have high expectations for pupils' work. However, the learning of the most-able pupils lacks pace and challenge. Senior and subject leaders know that more needs to be done so that steps in learning are planned well to enable teachers to track pupils' progress better.
- Leaders and teachers have worked successfully to make sure that pupils understand how well they are doing and how to make progress. Teachers give pupils good feedback on their work so that they know what to do to improve it or learn from their mistakes. Pupils respond very well to this feedback. They know that teachers want them to take care with their handwriting and the presentation of their work; they have risen to the challenge well.
- Pupils are extremely well looked after in this school so that they thrive in many ways: their safety, self-confidence, welfare, getting on with each other and adults, and enjoying school and learning. This attention to individual circumstances and needs is an absolute strength of the school. In many cases, the school is extremely successful in helping these children become ready to learn but, inevitably, academic progress is often slow. Leaders do not currently capture this success well enough to be able to demonstrate how effective they are. Individual starting points are not defined well enough to measure progress precisely.
- Good attention is given to subjects other than English and mathematics. During this visit I saw high-quality work in art that was linked very well to the school's current Sport Relief theme. The school's leaders track pupils' progress in other subjects well. Good work was seen in pupils' books in, for example, history and science. However, the mix of work in pupils' topic books makes it difficult to see the progress in their learning.
- Governors provide good leadership. They have a good understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve, and provide the senior leaders with a good balance of support and challenge. They know the complexities of the school well, but fully recognise the need to focus on raising pupils' achievement.

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 visits the school regularly to check on progress. A full review of the school, including an external perspective, was undertaken recently. This provided the school's leaders with useful feedback to help them focus on key points that require more rapid improvement. The local authority has also provided training that has helped improve the quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

James Sage  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**