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Mrs Jayne Neveu
Deerhurst and Apperley Church of England Primary School
Apperley
Gloucester
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Dear Mrs Neveu

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Deerhurst and Apperley Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 July 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.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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.

The school should take further action to maintain the impressive rate of improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and four subject leaders. I also met with two representatives from the governing body and the school improvement officer from the local authority. Together, you and I visited all the classes to observe the pupils at work and we also looked at some of their books. The school's action and development plans were evaluated. I also considered the outcomes of the external governance review and the external pupil premium review that were undertaken shortly after the inspection. I reviewed any additions made to your single central record since the section 5 inspection.

Context

Since the inspection, two full-time teachers have left. They have been replaced by one teacher who is employed on a full-time basis and two part-time teachers. Three teaching assistants have left and they have been replaced by one full-time member of staff, with additional hours allocated to those already employed in the school. There are three new governors, including a new chair of the governing body.

Main findings

Having taken up your post just a few weeks before the autumn inspection, you fully anticipated that inspectors would find much that needed to be done to make sure that all pupils were reaching their full potential. Since the inspection, you have quickly raised teachers' expectations and pupils' aspirations.

You have skilfully involved teachers in the review of each other's lesson planning and the scrutiny of pupils' work. This has enabled them to understand that they are all accountable for the success of the school. Teachers are now clear about what is expected of them and there is a consistency in the way the school operates. For example, you and your teaching staff have adopted an agreed approach to the planning of lessons. This includes the identification of clear learning intentions and criteria which help pupils understand what they have learned. The marking policy is used consistently well by all teachers and the comments they make help the pupils to improve their work. Governors are all linked to class teachers and are involved in the different subject areas that these teachers lead. This ensures that governors are kept well informed about the day-to-day life of the school and the new initiatives that are introduced.

Changes to teaching and learning in Reception have had a very positive impact on the rates of progress made by the youngest children. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities have made accelerated progress because they have been given extra help to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills. Additional reading sessions that you have provided have also helped the children gain greater confidence in their ability to read aloud. Consequently, almost all the children have reached a good level of development, which is a significant improvement on previous years. Your early analysis of the skills of children who will be transferring from your pre-school has enabled you and your team to be well prepared to meet their needs when they start school shortly.

Pupils are now making much better progress in their understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters represent). In the most recent 2016 phonics screening check at the end of Year 1, all pupils achieved the expected standard. This is a result of more precise teaching and effective use of resources to support pupils' learning. Those pupils who have found learning letters and sounds a challenge have been given extra help. This has given them more confidence to work out unknown words for themselves.

Pupils' achievement has improved significantly in key stages 1 and 2. Teachers have gained a much better understanding of the different groups of pupils they teach. Regular 'progress meetings' between you, the class teachers and governors ensure that all pupils are being carefully checked and monitored. If it is identified that additional help is needed to support a pupil, this is immediately put into effect. This has resulted in the complete closure of the gap in outcomes between those key stage 1 pupils who are disadvantaged and others. The gap between these two groups of pupils in key stage 2 has narrowed significantly.

The introduction of a journal for pupils' writing means that their progress can be checked systematically and tracked from Reception. This has raised pupils' writing skills impressively. Teachers' relentless focus on pupils' accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar and neat and legible presentation is having a very positive impact on the quality and depth of pupils' writing. This is reflected in the extremely impressive results for writing in the most recent national tests in Years 2 and 6 and is testament to the improvements in teaching and learning.

You and your teaching staff have given particular attention to the way in which you pose questions to the pupils. In particular, this helps the most able pupils evaluate what they think about what they have learned and to apply the knowledge they have gained to solve other problems. Learning has become much more 'alive' and linked to everyday life. For example, the regular 'enterprise' projects involve pupils in market research, completing tally charts, working out costings and using their writing skills to draft reports. This particularly challenges the most able and enables them to extend their learning.

Governors took an active part in the external review of their role. As a consequence, they have undertaken training and are much clearer about their roles and responsibilities. They feel much better informed about the life of the school and appreciate the detailed information that you provide for them. Governors consider that they have a higher profile around school and parents have a better awareness of who they are. Following the external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding, the governing body has an improved understanding of how this funding should be spent to gain the maximum impact on outcomes. They have updated the school's website with the required information on the use of pupil premium funding and ensured that all other statutory requirements are met, including safeguarding arrangements.

External support

Your teachers have joined the Tewkesbury District Partnership, which has enabled them to network with other schools and attend subject leaders' meetings. Joint moderation sessions have helped them gain confidence in assessing pupils' work. Recommendations from a workshop that focused on closing the gap between those who are disadvantaged and those who are not, have been swiftly put into place with positive outcomes. The local authority officer meets regularly to check on the

progress being made by the school and suggests other services which you can use to support further school improvement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the diocese of Gloucester and the director of children's services for Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector