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Mrs Elizabeth Dyer
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dyer

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Nine Acres Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 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 June 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- embed a culture of high expectations, with all staff making effective use of assessment information to ensure that the needs of all pupils, especially the disadvantaged and the most able, are well met
- ensure that all teachers take responsibility for improving their practice, particularly with regards to the teaching and learning of mathematics
- undertake a review of governance to ensure that all governors have a good understanding of how they can help the school to become good.

Evidence

I observed nine parts of lessons across the school, accompanied by either yourself or the assistant headteacher. I looked at a range of pupils' work in English and mathematics, scrutinised school documentation including the school's single central record, minutes of meetings held by the governing body, reports of visits by the local authority and the school improvement plans. I spoke to two local authority officers on the telephone, met with you, your assistant headteacher, a group of staff, a group of pupils and two governors including the chair of the governing body. I took account of a letter received from a parent and reviewed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Context

There have been a number of changes to staffing and to the governing body since the school was last inspected. In September 2015, you took up the post of headteacher and a new chair and vice-chair of the governing body were appointed. At the end of the summer term 2015, three teachers left the school and several others have since resigned. The school has appointed new staff, due to start working at the school in September 2016, so that every class will have a teacher. You have restructured the middle leadership team.

Main findings

The school is improving, albeit not as quickly as it could. Together with the senior leadership team, you are tackling areas requiring improvement with rigour and determination. However, the capacity within the governing body, although improving well, is not yet strong. This is due to vacancies on the governing body and a need for some further training. Although the majority of staff share your vision for the school, a few do not. This has slowed the progress made to ensuring that all teaching is consistently good or better across the school, and to securing good progress for all pupils. However, together with the governing body and senior leadership team, you are working effectively to resolve this situation.

As a result of your determination to help the school to improve, you were quick to ensure that staff implemented the new curriculum that was introduced by the Department for Education in 2014. This has raised the expectations of most staff of what pupils should achieve. You have ensured that there is a clear planning framework for teachers to help them to deliver the curriculum and to ensure better levels of progression from one year to the next. By restructuring the leadership team and taking on board the good advice from the local authority, you have improved the effectiveness and quality of leadership and management at the school. Consequently, the leadership team promotes greater progression and continuity, not just between key stages but between year groups. Teachers benefit

from opportunities to observe good practice in other schools. This helps them to improve their own teaching. They have also benefited from training provided by local authority specialists about how to raise standards of writing and mathematics. This has led to many providing more challenge for pupils during lessons, particularly in writing. However, from the work seen in books and the lessons observed, there is still not a culture of high expectations embedded throughout the school. Furthermore, while some staff make very good use of assessment information to ensure that the needs of disadvantaged and the most able are well met, this is not the case for all staff.

The lessons observed and the work in pupils' books highlight that the quality of teaching and learning in English has significantly improved. However, not all teachers have taken enough responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and learning of mathematics, and too few promote mastery of the subject well enough.

You hold teachers to account for the progress made by their pupils. For the first time, teachers all have performance management targets linked to pupils' outcomes. The same has been done for learning support assistants. Support staff have risen particularly well to this challenge. They have made great strides to improving their effectiveness. However, as observed in a small minority of lessons, when they are not well deployed by teachers, this limits their effectiveness in supporting pupils, especially those who require additional help.

The leadership team has revised a range of policies to reflect the higher expectations: for example about handwriting, marking and assessment. However, having looked through a range of books, it is evident that marking and feedback remain inconsistent across the school due to a few teachers not implementing the school's policy well enough.

Most of the staff who spoke to me stated that they recognise that since your arrival the school has become more focused on providing a good quality of education. They are of the view that although teaching and learning activities in the past were enjoyable, they are now more enjoyable and also ensure that pupils make better progress and achieve higher standards. Most teachers work hard and effectively to help pupils to catch up with basic skills that were not always sufficiently well taught in the past. However, not all staff have engaged willingly with initiatives aimed at helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This has slowed the progress made to some areas in need of improvement. Consequently, although the quality of teaching is improving and there are pockets of good practice across the school, teaching is still not securely good or better to ensure that all pupils in key stages 1 and 2 make good progress.

The pupils I spoke to during the inspection said they are happy and feel safe at school. They told me that they enjoy writing more than they did before, and that practising their spellings and handwriting every day has helped them to improve. They now take great pride in their work and ensure that it is well presented. This

was all confirmed from the work I saw in their books. Pupils appreciate feedback about their work because this helps them to know how to improve. They also welcome having the time to respond to feedback. They told me that they now feel more confident about writing, so much so that several were keen to tell me about how they choose to write when they are at home. Some pupils in Year 5 were observed developing good skills of descriptive writing and appropriate use of punctuation. Inspired by Shakespeare's 'Midsummer night's dream', a group of pupils working together wrote 'Clad in magical armour, covered in poison ivy, he struck his mighty staff into the tree stump.'

Many pupils who spoke to me feel the school has improved and provides a better quality of education since your arrival. Pupils stated that while they feel suitably well challenged in their work in English, this is not always the case in mathematics. This was reflected in some of the lessons observed. Pupils said that they appreciate the rewards system that celebrates their achievements both in and out of school. They told me that while they are sad that some of the staff are leaving, they are looking forward to getting to know the new staff and the different things they will learn.

Information about pupils shows that they are making progress and that gaps between disadvantaged and other pupils are closing. However, improvements have been slow and some key milestones that are aspirational have not been met. The early years foundation stage remains a strength within the school. There are pockets of good practice across the school, with pupils making good progress in some classes, but this is not the case in all year groups.

Governors are developing the skills needed for them to challenge and support the school. However, they would benefit from a review of their effectiveness to ensure that as a governing body they are well placed to help the school to become good as quickly as possible.

Safeguarding at the school is effective. You ensure that checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are thorough and rigorous.

There were insufficient responses to Parent View for results to be shown or reported.

Together with the senior leadership team, you produced a suitable plan to help the school get to good. The plan includes clear and appropriate timescales and correctly identifies all the areas in need for improvement. It also contains a sharp focus on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and aspirational targets. The leadership team monitors progress across the school regularly and rigorously. Teachers are provided with helpful next steps to help them to improve their practice. Where these are acted on, teaching is improving well. However, despite support and training, some teachers are not using assessment sufficiently well to enhance pupils' learning. This has reduced the progress made by some of the pupils. Through the use of lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work and the

termly raising of attainment plans, school leaders focus sharply on the progress made by pupils in every class. They challenge teachers' expectations appropriately where these are found to be low.

The teachers who met with me spoke very positively about the changes introduced at the school. They confirm that they are better at checking on the progress made by their pupils and that this helps them to plan subsequent learning more effectively. They have welcomed the introduction of the new curriculum and the clear and higher expectations that this presents of both teaching and learning. They have a better understanding of what good teaching looks like. This was confirmed through my observations of their teaching and from the work in their pupils' books.

Teachers spoke highly of the quality of the learning support assistants who contribute well to their lessons. They have also welcomed the new planning format, particularly for teaching English, and the focus on using a range of high-quality literature as a starting point to inspire pupils with their writing. Staff appreciate the opportunities of learning from each other as they share what they have gained from training courses. One teacher stated, 'I've had the best year ever... I make best use of my learning support assistants and I am now more focused on what my pupils need.'

The outcomes from this year's standard assessment tests show that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics, reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar by the end of Year 6 is below the national average. This reflects a legacy of underachievement in the past and a previous lack of rigour in teaching pupils basic skills, including spelling. However, the quality of the work in pupils' books shows signs of accelerated improvement this year. A high proportion of pupils this year reached the expected standards in the phonics (the sounds that letters represent) check in Year 1. The proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year continues to be high.

The local authority completed a review of the school's use of the pupil premium (this is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after). You acted swiftly on their recommendations. This led to improvements in the leadership and management of how well the additional funding is used. A good example is the increased effectiveness with which learning support assistants enhance the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders, managers and governors are all sharply focused on the need to secure consistently good or better teaching across the school and good progress for pupils at key stages 1 and 2. There is a clear and ambitious plan of action aimed at accelerating improvements. You monitor and evaluate the progress against key milestones regularly and accurately. Leaders and managers act effectively and with urgency to help the school to improve. You have secured the appointment of all the necessary teaching staff required for September 2016.

External support

The local authority provides the school with good and effective support. This has helped to strengthen the leadership and management of the school, and contributed to improvements to the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in English. The local authority identified good schools for teachers to visit. This helped teachers to reflect on how they can improve their practice. The local authority undertakes regular reviews of the school, and provides clear and timely written feedback. Their review of the school's use of the pupil premium was detailed and thorough, and led to significant improvement to how well the funding is used.

In discussion with governors, they stated that Hampshire local authority's involvement is one of the best things that could have happened to the school. While they recognise the good work of the teaching and learning coach with staff, they know that a few staff have resisted adopting the good, modern practice being promoted.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for the Isle of Wight. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector