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Dear Mr Jolley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chesswood Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 20 January 2017, 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:

- ensure that school improvement documentation is sufficiently succinct, manageable and fit for purpose to support leaders' drive for improvement efficiently
- analyse assessment information about pupils' progress in a timely manner
- give pupils enough opportunities to develop the stamina to write well at length.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your deputy, a group of

leaders responsible for particular subjects and year groups, the special educational needs coordinator, the pastoral manager and learning mentor, two specialist teachers, six governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. The focus of these discussions was the effectiveness of actions taken since the last inspection. You and your deputy joined me as I sampled teaching and learning across 11 lessons. During these visits to classes, I looked at the work in pupils' books and talked to them about their learning. I spoke informally with a number of parents at the start of the day and read letters and emails sent to me by six parents. I also analysed 93 responses entered over the last year to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I studied school improvement documentation and checked the single central register.

Context

There has been a considerable turnover in teaching staff since the previous inspection, with 11 new teachers joining at the start of September and another subsequently. Due to budgetary constraints, the leadership structure has reduced from two deputy headteachers to one. There have been significant changes to the membership of the governing body and a new chair has been elected. There is a new adviser linked to the school, working on behalf of the local authority.

Main findings

Taking account of all available evidence, the school is moving in the right direction. The determination and drive of leaders at different levels are clear to see. With your deputy and other leaders, you have managed the significant turnover in teaching staff at the start of the current academic year well. Teaching is improving. I saw clear evidence that teachers are more adept at using their assessments of pupils' capabilities to meet pupils' needs and plan the right next steps. The structured and systematic action you take with your deputy to improve teaching works. You make thoughtful decisions about the deployment of staff to lift outcomes for pupils. Improving the overall quality of daily teaching is a rightful priority, as this will have a positive impact on outcomes for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

You have implemented a rigorous system of appraisal. Performance targets focus strongly on pupils' outcomes and shine a particular spotlight on lifting the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Pay progression for staff is dependent on performance and not automatic. You have taken further action to improve and refine assessment systems and are increasingly confident in the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment and progress.

Work in pupils' books and on display reflects good attitudes, rising expectations and high aspirations. However, along with the governors, you are acutely aware that this was not reflected in the school's 2016 performance data. Outcomes were weak for Year 6 leavers in writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils did much worse than other pupils nationally. The current Year 6 began from lower starting

points than their predecessors. You are rightly concerned that your assessment information shows that many still have a way to go to meet age-related expectations and you have targeted additional teaching accordingly. This is just one example of how you were able to demonstrate much stronger links between your self-evaluation and the actions taken as a result.

The school has a calm, industrious atmosphere. Pupils are responding well to an increased emphasis on developing their reasoning skills in mathematics. The high profile of writing is evident in the well-presented examples displayed throughout the school. However, although pupils have regular opportunities to write for a range of purposes, in some classes they do not write for long enough to develop their ideas, skills or stamina. Parents that spoke and wrote to me were effusive in their praise of the school and how it nurtures individuals. They particularly value the rich experiences offered to their children and rightly commend the school for recognising that it is not necessary to narrow the curriculum in order to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

While disappointed, you took the findings of the previous inspection report extremely seriously. You analysed the findings in great detail in your strong desire to take the right action for the school to be judged good overall once again. You were able to demonstrate to me how you and other leaders use your own varied checks of the school's performance to tackle weaker areas, particularly where pupils' outcomes are not good enough. However, the extensive paperwork that you have generated to underpin this process has become unwieldy. Consequently, you have not been able to maintain it, including the extensively detailed action plan, so it is no longer a useful tool to help you drive improvement.

The external review that you commissioned of the school's use of pupil premium funding identified many strengths in the school's work. True to your school's clear ethos, you have taken a holistic view of how to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. They are very well represented in the extremely popular breakfast club, the enthusiastic group that were departing for their early morning run as I arrived and in the beautifully harmonious singing of the choir, which will shortly have the honour of performing at Disneyland Paris. Disadvantaged pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to school. This year, their attendance is improving quickly from previously low levels.

You have also taken action in response to the recommendations of the pupil premium review. Leaders and staff are diligently evaluating the early impacts of a wide range of interventions aimed at improving the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. You and governors recognise that the challenge of ensuring that this translates into diminishing differences comparing their performance with other pupils nationally remains. We agreed that the analysis of the available assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress needs to be completed in a timely manner so that any necessary resulting action is swift.

It is early days following extensive and relatively recent changes to the membership of the governing body. However, through our discussions, governors demonstrated that they are well placed to support and challenge leaders about the school's improvement and convey that they have the steel to do so. The chair of the governing body, supported by other governors, is very clear-sighted about the strengths of the school and the challenges that it still faces.

External support

The local authority has provided adequate support and challenge to the school. The assigned adviser provides useful insight and guidance aimed at increasing the capacity of leaders within the school. She is alert to the need to keep challenging leaders so that improvements to pupils' outcomes are secured quickly enough.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn
Her Majesty's Inspector