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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Heather Brand
Executive Headteacher
Ditchingham Church of England Primary Academy
Rider Haggard Way
Ditchingham
Bungay
Suffolk
NR35 2RE

Dear Mrs Brand

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ditchingham Church of England Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 26 June 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 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and local governors and the trust 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 parents have the opportunity to discuss their concerns with school leaders and the local governing body
- build on the good start made to improving pupils' learning behaviour.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the head of school, middle leaders, pupils, staff, parents, the chair of the local governing body, a trustee from the Diocese of Norwich Education Academy Trust (DNEAT), the academies group executive principal and the academies group improvement director, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school self-evaluation and improvement plans were evaluated. Mathematics teaching was observed in all four classes as was pupils' behaviour at lunchtime, around the school and in lessons. Pupils' work in mathematics and writing was scrutinised with the mathematics and English subject leaders.

Context

Since the previous inspection there have been two changes in teaching staff. One of the new teachers is the subject leader for mathematics.

Main findings

At the time of the last inspection the school had very recently federated with another local school and DNEAT had adopted both schools into the trust. Two terms on, the good impact of your leadership, the two schools working together as a federation and the support of DNEAT is evident in the rapid improvement the school has made.

Pupils' behaviour has improved in class and around the school because you and the staff have put in place an effective system for helping pupils to behave well. Pupils like the new approach to rewarding good behaviour and dealing with those who do not follow class rules. One pupil explained, 'We get a tick if we talk at the wrong time and each tick counts as two minutes of missing break. We don't like missing our break.' Although this new system is working well, it is not always applied continuously throughout lessons. For example, teachers and teaching assistants do not pick up on all off-task behaviour. Consequently, pupils do not complete as much work as they are capable of during lessons.

You have taken immediate action to increase the number of adults on the playground and there is currently good supervision at break and lunchtimes. As a result, pupils are safe and play happily together. The new Friday friendship club provides a good opportunity for older pupils to sort out any friendship issues they may have.

Teaching, learning and assessment have improved due to the effective training teachers have received from the DNEAT. Subject leaders understand their role and have started to review planning in their subjects. For example the new mathematics subject leader has revised the content of the mathematics curriculum alongside the executive principal. She has helped teachers to plan lessons that enable pupils to

develop reasoning skills and solve mathematical problems. Due to the improvements in teaching and subject leadership, the school's own data indicates that pupils' outcomes are much better this year than last year. For example in key stage 1 a much higher proportion of pupils achieved the expected standard. In key stage 2, the school more than doubled the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in 2017.

You and the head of school work closely together and have identified accurately and precisely the next steps for school improvement. Your self-evaluation is accurate due to the stringent monitoring you both carry out to check how well pupils are getting on. The school improvement plan is not as effective as it could be as there are too many priorities and these are not closely aligned with the key issues from the last inspection.

You know that you have not yet addressed the issue about ensuring pupils gain a better understanding of life in a multicultural society. This is because you have rightly prioritised improving pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning. You have improved communication with parents about school events and routines but a few parents would like more opportunities to talk to you and governors about their concerns.

The chair of the local governing body has a detailed knowledge and understanding of the improvements you have made since the last inspection. She and the governors give strong challenge as well as support to the school. For example, governors are now linked to subject areas and there is a planned schedule for monitoring the progress pupils are making. The pupil premium review has helped you and the governors become more rigorous in checking that this additional money is targeted to meet the needs of eligible pupils.

External support

DNEAT has given strong and effective support to the school. The group executive principal regularly checks that the actions you are taking are having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the executive board, the director of education for the Diocese of Norwich, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector