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Alison Woodhouse
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Woodhouse

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Peter's Church of England Aided Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 7 November 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 March 2017. 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, members of the governing body and teachers with responsibilities for literacy and mathematics to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I held telephone discussions with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese. I visited classrooms to observe the pupils working and to look at examples of their work. I held discussions with pupils informally during the lessons and with a group of pupils during lunchtime. I evaluated the school's improvement plan and looked at a range of other documents, including safeguarding records, records of the school's work to

improve the teaching of writing and of mathematics, and information from the school's system for tracking the current progress of the pupils.

Main findings

Working together, you and the governing body have improved the school's development plan. The plan incorporates the issues identified by the inspection in March. It now includes reasonably clear measures by which to judge the effectiveness of the proposed actions. Those measures are set out over regular intervals to allow you and the governors to track the school's progress in making improvements. The plan does not make clear which persons are responsible for ensuring that each of the proposed actions takes place. The omission has the potential to slow the current rate of progress at the school because important developments could 'slip through the net'.

You have put much work into setting up a coherent school-wide approach to assessing the pupils. Though still at an early stage of implementation, the approach is already enabling the teachers to understand more precisely than before how well the pupils are learning. The teachers are now using the information provided by the school-wide system to plan better to meet the particular learning needs of the pupils. As a result, their expectations of what the pupils can and need to do are rising. Furthermore, the teachers are providing the pupils, including the most able pupils, with work that is more challenging than previously.

The pupils with whom I spoke, especially the most able, manifestly, find the work that they are given to be stimulating and sufficiently difficult to give them a sense of achievement and pride in the progress that they are making. The pupils are currently making better progress than previously. That is evident in their work and in the information collected by the school about how well they are doing. This gives an indication that changes that you have made to the way that writing and mathematics are taught are having a beneficial effect.

You have introduced new carefully chosen programmes for teaching writing and mathematics. These approaches have led to noticeably more-consistent teaching. I saw evidence of and heard the pupils speak about a range of opportunities for the pupils to write in different subjects, including history, mathematics and science, and at length. The programme that you have selected for teaching mathematics has ensured that routinely the pupils have opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills, more so than was the case previously.

You have obtained effective training for the staff, so that they have been able to put the teaching programmes into practice. The new programmes are helping to improve the pupils' progress. The training provided to date has not covered all of the things that the teachers need to get the most out of the programmes.

The pupils' progress in reading and in mathematics improved notably in 2017.

Nevertheless, the pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2 was still substantially below the national averages. The evidence that the pupils are currently making better progress this year is tentative at this time. It is clear that much remains to be done to secure good progress by the pupils.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium has stalled. This means that you have made little progress with the area for improvement from the inspection concerning the use of the pupil premium. The review should now be completed as a matter of priority.

The pace of improvement at the school since the inspection has been inhibited by circumstances beyond the school's control. This has meant that it is only in the last few months that the pace of change has been rapid.

External support

The local authority has set up an 'improvement board' to oversee the progress of the school. It brings together key personnel from the school, the governing body, the diocese and the local authority. It is still at a relatively early stage of development, but is potentially a useful mechanism for coordinating efforts to support the school, providing professional challenge and ensuring rigorous evaluation of the school's progress. A recent change in personnel means that the school has only just begun to forge a relationship with a school improvement officer from the local authority. The initial plans for the work to be undertaken indicate a useful focus on supporting the school in monitoring the effectiveness of the various initiatives in teaching. The school has tapped into specialist training opportunities linked with the teaching initiatives. Overall, however, this range of support does not constitute a coherently planned programme. Some 'chopping and changing' in how the school obtains support has not assisted it in making consistently rapid progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss

Her Majesty's Inspector