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Fiona Crascall  
Headteacher  
Ash, Cartwright and Kelsey Church of England Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Crascall

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ash, Cartwright and Kelsey C of E Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on Thursday 22 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- embed the wider curriculum to deepen pupils' knowledge, skills and enjoyment across different subjects and plug remaining gaps in their learning
- speed up the pace of learning by providing more opportunities for pupils, including less-able pupils, to take responsibility for their learning and use their initiatives.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and subject leaders, a mixed group of staff, five members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last

inspection. You and I visited all of the classes together, some of them more than once, and we looked at the work around school and in pupils' books. I had lunch with a group of pupils. I reviewed information about current pupils' progress and attendance, safeguarding information, leaders' self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the school's action plan. I looked at records of governing body meetings, local authority support and challenge, and records of a recent review visit by headteachers and a deputy headteacher from your hub of schools. I took into account 68 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I also looked at the outcomes of an internal survey of parents' and carers' views from November 2017.

## **Context**

You, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), a senior teacher and six out of eight of the class teachers joined the school this academic year.

## **Main findings**

You, and your senior team have brought much-needed clarity of purpose and direction to the school and have achieved a great deal in a relatively short time. You have raised expectations about what adults and pupils can, and should, achieve. Several of the people I met praised your very obvious commitment to making sure that pupils' safety, well-being and learning are at the heart of the school.

You made very effective use of time during the summer term of 2017 to liaise with the interim headteacher, and set clear direction and expectations from the outset. You have overhauled the systems for teaching, managing behaviour, assessment and safeguarding. You and the other leaders are positive role models and are very visible around the school. You have a good understanding of the adults' and pupils' strengths and weaknesses. You respond quickly and provide hands-on support, which is much appreciated by the staff. You have formed a cohesive team of enthusiastic staff, several of whom are developing leadership roles and already making a significant positive impact on the teaching of English, mathematics, physical education and the wider curriculum.

The English and mathematics subject leaders have reviewed the content of the teaching and learning programmes for both subjects, brought them up to date with the most recent requirements, provided suitable resources and introduced more consistent approaches throughout the school. Teachers and assistants have received training and coaching, for example, in providing feedback and questioning. We saw good examples of these aspects during our learning walk. Mathematics, which was particularly weak, is moving forward well now, although it is taking time to identify and to plug all the gaps in learning due to weaker provision in the past. It is clear from the work in the pupils' books, and that seen in lessons, that pupils are benefiting from, and enjoying, the greater emphasis on reasoning and problem solving. They are able, and encouraged, to use appropriate mathematical vocabulary when explaining their reasoning. They opt for differently pitched challenges, and this is stretching the most able, in particular. They still find swift recall of number facts

problematic, and the mathematics leader is devising some quickly paced, enjoyable strategies to deal with this.

The wider curriculum has been completely overhauled and, as a result, pupils are relishing increased opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills across different subjects. You are keeping a close eye on the teachers' planning and the pupils' work, to make sure that the different subjects are being covered appropriately. Teachers are incorporating practical activities, and the pupils are enthusiastic about these, particularly about the linked visits and events such as Stone Age day. The school is vibrant with a wide range of work in history, geography, science, art and design technology. This includes some imaginative homework, such as the home-made set of stocks and the Mayan temple made from plastic construction blocks.

As far as possible, subjects are linked through a main topic, which makes the learning purposeful and relevant. This was very noticeable in the Reception class, where the theme of space travel was evident in stories, role-play, creative play and mathematics. The evidence in pupils' books shows that subjects are being explored in some depth although, again, there are gaps in pupils' knowledge, which will take time to address. Nonetheless, the books show that pupils are capable of producing high-quality, well-presented work. Pupils are able to talk knowledgeably about what they are learning, such as explaining why Tudor buildings have overhanging second floors, or the impact of a tsunami. They are rising to the increasing levels of challenge and said that they enjoy having to think hard because it stops them from becoming bored.

You have introduced a new assessment system and made sure that the information about how well pupils are achieving in reading, writing and mathematics is accurate. It is also more straightforward to analyse, so that staff and governors know how well all pupils and groups of pupils are doing. Regular meetings are held with staff to track individuals, to make sure that all pupils make sufficient progress and to take action when any are in danger of falling behind. Across the school, and across subjects, gaps in pupils' understanding are closing, and there are early signs that some are beginning to make very rapid progress indeed. This is important, as some of them have a lot of ground to make up if, as in the words of your mission statement, they are to exceed their potential.

In the past, pupils have been well behaved but rather compliant, rather than actively involved in their own learning. Some, particularly the less able, have relied too much on adults supporting them every step of the way. This has slowed their progress. You are trying to increase the pace of learning, through encouraging pupils to take greater responsibility for their work, and use their initiative more. This is coming along nicely, but the pace of learning is still not fast enough. There is more to do to raise expectations among adults and pupils, and provide better opportunities for this to happen as a matter of course.

The pupils' attendance has shot up this year, and incidents of poor behaviour have significantly reduced. This shows that pupils are enjoying the changes and keen to participate. Parents are very positive about the improvements, and this is evident in their responses both to the Parent View questionnaire and the in-house survey. They rightly believe that their children are safe, happy and well looked after. They said that the children are making good progress, and this is increasingly true.

Governors are very involved in school life. They visit the school regularly and reported their pleasure at the obvious improvements, particularly in the positive learning atmosphere. Governors carry out their responsibilities rigorously. For example, the chair of governors checked recently to make sure that systems for ensuring pupils' safety are fully in place. The school improvement plan is very detailed indeed, and you keep the governors fully informed about what is happening and what improvements are being achieved. At the moment, governors do not have a simple overview of the key areas for improvement and the evidence they expect to see, to show whether action taken is having sufficient impact.

### **External support**

You are benefiting from the support provided by being a member of a group of local schools, most of which are good or outstanding. In particular, you value the mentoring of an experienced headteacher. Staff share expertise and compare pupils' work from across the different schools. Inexperienced teachers have observed teaching and learning in other schools. The pupils also enjoy increasing opportunities to take part in various activities alongside pupils from the other schools. Several of them mentioned these activities to me and were clearly excited by taking part in them.

The local authority has provided support as well as challenge. The local authority improvement adviser is confident in your ability to move the school on rapidly. Some very honest feedback from local authority colleagues has confirmed your view on particular aspects of practice and, as a result, you have been supported to bring about change, including staff changes. You and your team have a very clear sense of direction. You know what needs to be done and have identified a challenging but practical plan of action. Together, you are moving the school forward.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald

**Ofsted Inspector**