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Mrs A Webster
Thatcham Park Church of England Primary
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Dear Mrs Webster

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Thatcham Park Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 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:

- ensure that remaining inconsistencies in teaching and learning are tackled with precision, particularly for the most able
- review systems for tracking pupils' progress over time, so that they enable leaders to see, at a glance, the proportions of pupils who have made more or less progress than expected.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, middle leaders, other teachers, a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and representatives from the

local authority and diocese, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. With senior leaders, I visited classes and looked at work in books. I reviewed documentation about the school's work, the school improvement plan, minutes of meetings and information about pupils' progress, to see the impact of leaders' actions to improve performance.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been changes of governors, including the chair, and six new teachers have joined the school.

Main findings

You have taken robust action to improve the school since the previous inspection. You responded with resilience and determination, tackling the identified weaknesses with focus and commitment. Working closely with the deputy headteacher, you have reviewed and sharpened strategic school improvement documents. These are now much more useful in helping leaders, staff and governors to know what they need to do next. The school improvement plan now has useful and appropriate milestones, against which you and governors check that the school is improving.

Leaders' work to improve assessment processes has been effective. Teachers speak with confidence about how they assess accurately and use the information to help them to know what pupils need to learn next. End-of-year targets are set at the beginning of the year, through discussions between the previous and new teachers, identifying what each individual can and should achieve over the year. Leaders and teachers meet each term to evaluate how much progress pupils have made and, for any who have not made enough progress, staff plan carefully what they need to do to help individuals to catch up.

Leaders have reviewed systems for collating and presenting information about pupils' attainment and progress. It is now easy to see how well pupils make progress during the year, and how they achieve at the end of each year and at the end of each key stage. However, the information about how well pupils do over the longer term is not clear, so leaders, teachers and governors cannot see when pupils are making more or less progress than is typical.

As a result of the improvements in assessment and reporting achievement, leaders and governors are able to see at a glance where the school is becoming more effective and where it is not doing well enough. For example, although there continues to be a gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, it is now easier to see where these gaps are being closed successfully, and where they are not.

You and senior leaders have identified where there were inconsistencies in teaching, and worked with precision to embed an agreed approach. In lessons across the school, teachers are now much clearer about what they need to teach and what they

expect pupils to learn as a result, both at the end of the lesson and over time. Pupils spoke confidently about how well they were doing and what they needed to do next.

Leaders tackle weaknesses in teaching with determination. Weaker practice is identified quickly and appropriate support is put in place to ensure that teaching improves. Where the necessary developments are not seen, leaders do not shy away from difficult decisions. As a result, some teachers have left the school during the year, which has caused some tension with parents. However, the improved progress that pupils have then made confirms that leaders' actions were effective. Despite this, a few inconsistencies in teaching remain.

Across the school, we saw pupils behaving well, working hard and wanting to learn. They were keen to talk to us about what they were learning and how well they were getting on. Work in books confirms that, as leaders say, pupils are doing well. There are inconsistencies in presentation and expectations in some classes, but leaders recognise this and are taking action.

The majority of teachers plan how to meet the needs of the most able pupils effectively. Some newer teachers do not demonstrate the same accuracy in meeting these pupils' needs, so a few of the most able pupils are not yet doing quite as well as they should.

Middle leaders are developing their skills and knowledge in their areas of responsibility. They know the priorities and what they need to do to drive improvements. They are appropriately involved in monitoring teaching, and they work with senior leaders to review progress in their subjects.

Changes in governance have been positive. Governors now hold leaders more robustly to account. A useful skills audit enabled the governing body to see where they did not have enough expertise and to recruit strategically to fill the gaps. Governors visit the school to check on what they are told by staff, providing feedback to colleagues through written reports.

External support

The school has engaged very well with external support. The local authority has provided copious and effective support to help you drive improvements. In addition to challenging leaders through regular visits, the local authority has undertaken detailed reviews of effectiveness and provided support with mathematics, phonics and meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils. The diocese has provided support in other areas, particularly spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and has liaised well with the local authority to have a good overview of provision and avoid duplication.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, and the chief executive officer, the director of education for the Diocese of Oxford, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for West Berkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Louise Adams

Ofsted Inspector