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Mrs Sarah George
St Peter's CofE (A) Primary School
School Lane
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Dear Mrs George

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Peter's CofE (A) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 April 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:

- improvement plans identify measurable success criteria to enable governors to hold leaders to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes more rigorously
- leaders evaluate the impact of teaching and improvement actions on pupils' progress more precisely to ensure that all pupils make strong progress from their starting points, particularly the most able pupils
- subject leadership is developed beyond English, mathematics and religious education to further improve teaching and raise standards.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, four middle leaders and two members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. Short visits to lessons in all year groups were made with the headteacher, and work in pupils' books was examined. Documents were evaluated, including improvement plans, the school's self-evaluation summary, minutes of governors' meetings, notes of visits made by the local authority, records of checks made on the quality of teaching and information about pupils' current attainment and progress. The single central record of recruitment and vetting checks was scrutinised along with a sample of safeguarding records.

Context

Since the previous inspection in June 2016, there have been a number of changes of teaching staff. The number of pupils on roll has fluctuated and, in September 2017, leaders restructured the school to create three mixed-age classes. As part of this change, the early years provision was extended to cater for nursery-age children. A new chair of governors took up post in September 2017.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, time has been spent addressing poor teaching and securing a stable teaching team. Now that a new team is in place, the quality of teaching is improving. Some teaching is strong and leaders are addressing remaining weaknesses. Teachers' targets focus on developing teaching and raising standards. Expectations are clear, and leaders make regular checks to ensure that teachers are implementing agreed actions.

The headteacher and other leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They rightly identify that, while there is effective practice in the school, the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes remain inconsistent. Action plans identify clear and appropriate priorities for improvement. However, these plans do not contain measurable success criteria. As a result, governors are not able to monitor the impact of actions and hold leaders to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes rigorously enough.

Leaders have successfully raised teachers' expectations of pupils, particularly of the most able pupils. Teachers have received training to improve their questioning skills and to support them in planning opportunities for pupils to work at greater depth. As a result, teachers' questioning is increasingly effective. Observations of learning and pupils' books show that teachers are challenging the most able pupils to think more deeply in some classes. In 2017, attainment at greater depth in reading and mathematics in key stage 1 was above national averages. Attainment at the higher standards in key stage 2 rose. However, the progress of high-attaining pupils from

their starting points remained below national figures in writing and mathematics. Current assessment information shows that the most able pupils do not consistently make the progress of which they are capable.

The quality of teaching is improving. Teachers expect pupils to work hard, and productive use is made of lesson time. Work in books shows that pupils of all abilities complete tasks conscientiously. However, variability in the quality of teaching remains, which means that pupils do not make strong progress in all classes.

A focus on improving pupils' spelling is working. Assessment information shows that pupils' spelling ability is improving rapidly. Pupils' work shows that they are learning to apply their spelling skills more accurately in their writing. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in spelling, grammar and punctuation at the end of key stage 2 rose and was in line with the national average. However, pupils' attainment in writing in key stage 1 remains low. Pupils' progress in key stage 2 has declined over the last two years and was in the bottom 20% of schools nationally in 2017. Although school data indicates that current pupils' attainment and progress in writing are rising, there are still improvements to be made.

Work in books shows that teachers are providing opportunities for pupils to reason mathematically more regularly. Teachers are becoming more proficient at teaching reasoning skills. This is helping pupils to explain their thinking more clearly. As a result, a higher proportion of pupils are working at the standard expected for their age in Years 4, 5 and 6. Pupils in all year groups are making stronger progress.

Pupils' mathematics books show that they learn to form numbers correctly. This is because leaders have implemented a set of non-negotiables for the quality of pupils' presentation. Leaders monitor these through regular scrutiny of pupils' work. As a result, pupils' presentation in English and mathematics is of a good standard in most classes. Leaders are aware of where pupils' presentation does not meet their high expectations and are tackling this.

Leaders have reviewed the way in which they track the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) knows individual pupils well and closely monitors their progress. She has worked alongside teachers to raise their expectations of what these pupils can achieve. Staff have also received training to develop their skills in meeting the needs of this group of pupils. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive high-quality support in lessons. Skilled teaching assistants ask effective questions to check pupils' understanding and to move their learning forward. Work in books shows that these pupils are now making better progress from their starting points in writing and mathematics.

Subject leaders in English and mathematics now take responsibility for improving outcomes in their subjects. They provide training for staff and make regular checks

on the quality of teaching and pupils' work. As a result, there is greater consistency in pupils' books. For example, teachers now routinely follow the school's policy on the teaching of spelling and on how to give feedback to pupils to help them to improve their work. However, leaders' monitoring focuses mainly on compliance with school policies. Leaders do not evaluate the impact of teaching on the progress of individuals and groups of pupils closely enough. This means that some pupils continue to make slower progress than they should.

Due to staff changes, subject leadership beyond English, mathematics and religious education is not yet in place. Plans are in place to train subject leaders, but this development is new.

Leaders have improved the approach taken to assessing children's starting points when they begin in Nursery and Reception. Adults now use a range of evidence to assess children's knowledge and skills, including observations along with information from parents and carers and early years' settings. As a result, adults know children well and have an accurate understanding of their strengths and next steps. They make effective use of this knowledge to inform planning and teaching.

Adults in the early years place a strong focus on ensuring that topics are engaging and capture children's interest, particularly that of boys. There has been an emphasis on improving boys' writing through the development of their fine motor skills and careful planning to meet their individual needs. As a result, boys are keen to write and engage well in writing activities. In 2017, the proportion of boys achieving the expected standard in writing at the end of the Reception Year rose to above the national average. The proportion of boys achieving a good level of development was higher than that of girls and above that of boys nationally. Boys are currently making progress that is similar to that of girls.

At the start of the inspection, one aspect of the school's safeguarding procedures was not up to date. Leaders satisfactorily addressed this by the end of the inspection. Another aspect remained unclear. The headteacher and governors are aware of the need to ensure that all basic procedures are in place and continually updated.

External support

Leaders and teachers benefit from the external support provided by the local authority. There has been a clear focus on working with leaders to address the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Representatives from the local authority provide regular support and training to improve leaders' knowledge and skills. They monitor and evaluate the actions leaders take and provide clear and appropriate advice regarding next steps of development. Leaders are responsive to this advice and value the external support they receive. The local authority has brokered a commissioning support officer to work with the headteacher. However,

frequent changes in personnel have meant that there have been some inconsistencies in the guidance provided.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector