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Ms Diana West
Whitchurch CofE Junior School
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Dear Ms West

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Whitchurch CofE Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 21 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in November 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, vice-chair of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the chief executive officer of the trust which the school is set to join. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated. I looked at the school's safeguarding documents related to the employment of staff, records of monitoring activities and minutes of governors' meetings.

I carried out a brief learning walk with you, looked in pupils' books and spoke to pupils about their learning. I heard a group of pupils from Year 3 and Year 6 read. I met with parents and carers at the start of the school day.

Context

Since the last inspection, four new support staff have joined the school. Two new

parent governors have been appointed to the governing body. Plans are in place for the school to become a sponsored academy in October 2018.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since the last inspection, you have focused on key priorities in order to improve the school. Your detailed improvement plan continues to be revised with help from the local authority. You have worked with a range of external partners in order to support staff development and improve leadership skills at all levels. However, sometimes mixed messages have been given by the different partners involved and this has slowed the pace of some improvements.

You acted with suitable urgency to improve the teaching of reading across the school. Leaders for English introduced clear expectations for all year groups. They monitor learning regularly to help develop greater consistency across the school and within each year group. Comprehension skills are taught explicitly. Regular assessments identify any pupil who is struggling with their reading. Effective support is now given to help them improve more quickly. As a result, the school's assessment information indicates that outcomes in reading are rising and more pupils are attaining the expectations for their age.

Pupils' basic skills, such as punctuation, handwriting and presentation, are developing steadily in English. The introduction of the 'learning check' helps pupils know exactly what is expected. Most of the pupils who spoke to me during the visit understood the purpose behind what they were learning to do. Regular checks on pupils' books contribute to leaders' evaluations of the impact of the improvements being made. You know there is still more to be done to improve pupils' spelling and ensure that basic skills are well developed across the whole curriculum.

Your leadership team is growing in effectiveness. The leader of provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has a well-developed strategy to improve the progress of this group of pupils. She is determined that their barriers to learning will not hinder their progress. She works effectively with teachers to help them plan work which is appropriate and offers a suitable challenge.

You have introduced new assessment trackers and tests. You work closely with your leadership team to check pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. You have set targets for all pupils but know that these need to be even more challenging if pupils are to reach the higher standards.

The external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding is almost complete. You and your team now have a clear understanding of the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils face. All staff understand the part they play in helping pupils make better progress so that more disadvantaged pupils reach age-related expectations. You have taken effective action to improve the attendance of

this group of pupils. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent has fallen this year from 17% to 3%.

The governing body is committed to improving its effectiveness. Following the external review of governance carried out by the local authority, governors now ask appropriate questions to hold you more to account for the improvements in the school. Setting up the strategic committee and meeting more regularly enables governors to be better informed. For example, they are able to check the impact of the actions taken to improve reading and basic skills. Governors know where the improvement has not yet been rapid enough to improve outcomes for all groups of pupils.

The local authority has worked effectively to support and challenge the school. A new adviser was appointed to the school in November 2017. Through her regular visits, leaders have sharpened their view of the school and are able to plan more carefully for the improvements needed. Effective additional support for middle leaders helps them to lead improvements in English and develop the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's action plans are fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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 Shropshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Harwood
Her Majesty's Inspector