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5 July 2018

Mrs Jo Walker  
Poulner Junior School  
North Poulner Road  
North Poulner  
Ringwood  
Hampshire  
BH24 3LA

Dear Mrs Walker

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Poulner Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 June 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 recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, middle leaders and 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. You accompanied me in visiting classrooms and provided me with a wide range of the school's documentation to scrutinise. The school self-evaluation and improvement plan was evaluated. I met with a group of pupils to review their work and spoke to some pupils during lessons. I considered the 77 responses to Ofsted's online survey, including several letters sent to me by parents and carers.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, there have been substantial changes to the leadership of the school. The interim headteacher left the school, and you were appointed as headteacher in April 2017. In September 2017, the seconded deputy headteacher was appointed to the substantive post. In April 2018, a new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) was appointed. Approximately half of the teaching staff has changed. The school is fully staffed.

## **Main findings**

Since the last inspection, leaders have worked effectively to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders have been particularly successful in setting up consistent systems for monitoring and supporting teaching. These are now more systematic, link well to overall improvement plans and are clearly helping staff to refine their teaching where needed.

A strong programme of professional development is in place for teachers, including through utilising support from the local authority in English and mathematics. This is resulting in improved teaching and much more consistency across the school. For example, in mathematics teachers have ensured that pupils are developing their problem-solving and reasoning skills more effectively than previously. Pupils use mathematical resources more confidently throughout the school to help them understand the mathematics they are studying. In English, pupils value the feedback teachers provide. Pupils are starting to edit and improve their work in a more methodical way than in the past. Some of the improvements to teaching have been introduced relatively recently, so you rightly plan to continue to monitor teaching to ensure that new methods are embedded in teachers' practice.

A new assessment system has been embedded. Teachers use their regular assessment of pupils' work to plan learning which meets their needs more precisely, so that pupils are making better progress than they have previously. At a whole-school level, the assessment system provides more accurate information, allowing leaders to confidently show that pupils are making better progress across the school than in the past. Information provided by your assessment system also allows you to see where further improvements to teaching are needed. For example, you recognise that too few pupils achieve the greater depth standard in writing and that further challenge for pupils is needed.

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum as a whole to ensure that it is fit for purpose. A new approach to reading is working well. Pupils said that they enjoy their reading lessons much more and like the new texts they are studying. Your performance information shows that reading is increasingly a strength of the school. A review of pupils' work in books shows that pupils are starting to develop subject-specific skills across the whole curriculum, including in science. The range and depth of pupils'

work across several subjects has improved. This is particularly helping to improve the progress of boys; some told me that they are much more interested in their learning because of the changes you have made to the curriculum. Leaders' next steps are to ensure that pupils have opportunities to write in detail in a wide range of subjects, as the revised curriculum is rolled out more fully from September.

Leaders and governors have a much better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school than previously. You have made sure that self-evaluation and improvement plans have been refined and clearly show the steps you are taking to improve the school. You evaluate the impact of your actions before planning next steps. Governors have better access to this information. They have undertaken training provided by the local authority so that they know how to carry out their roles productively. Minutes of meetings show that governors are holding the school to account more thoroughly, although sometimes they accept assertions made by leaders a little too readily.

Pupils' progress, including that of boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, is improving as a result of better teaching and more careful tracking of pupils' progress in the school. Recent improvements to the quality of education for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are particularly impressive. Parents spoke especially highly of the care and attention received by pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The effectiveness of provision for disadvantaged pupils is less evident; although progress is getting better, these pupils achieve much less than their peers nationally. Your plans to sharpen this area of the school's work are well judged.

Much work has been done by yourself and governors to ensure that the school's policies and website are up to date. The new website is easy for parents to navigate and contains more helpful information than in the past. However, at the time of my visit, the website was not fully compliant with statutory requirements, because some information in your documentation was not quite up to date. For example, the impact of pupil premium funding was not fully evaluated, some required information about governance was not available and required information about pupils' performance was not fully available. You are working on improving these aspects. Rightly, you wish to go beyond the compliancy regulations, for example by improving the information available to parents about the content of the curriculum.

You and governors recognise that, in the past, middle leaders were underutilised in the school. Consequently, since the last inspection you have provided them with training and support so that they now have the skills needed to lead subject areas and support their colleagues in improving their teaching skills further. The middle leaders I spoke to were enthusiastic about this help and ready to demonstrate further their ability to play a vital part in the school's overall improvement.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to improve pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures, in order to better prepare them for life in modern

Britain. You have decided to achieve this through regular religious education lessons, which help pupils to understand the beliefs and practices of people of different faiths, and through the broader curriculum in which pupils study different cultures and lifestyles. Assemblies and discussions provide a backdrop to this learning. During my visit, I also noted that much work is being done to make sure that pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain in a broader sense. For example, you regularly celebrate the achievements of pupils who demonstrate the new school 'heart values' (standing for honesty, excellence, attitude, respect and thoughtfulness). Pupils were especially keen to tell me how important it is for there to be diversity in the community. They gave examples such as 'It's OK to support different nations in the football world cup', and that they understand that families can be made up in many different ways, including some that have parents with the same gender.

Pupils have noticed the positive changes to their school. They told me that they like the fact that work is now 'harder', especially in mathematics and writing. They also said how much more they enjoy learning because the work they are given across the whole curriculum interests them. They appreciate new resources, like the library and computer suite, as well as the increasing range of clubs, trips and activities they are now able to take part in on a regular basis. Most especially, they praised their teachers for always being ready to listen and 'for being nice'. Pupils feel safe and happy in school. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, agree.

### **External support**

External support provided by Hampshire local authority has been very effective in supporting you to improve the quality of teaching and in supporting leaders to improve the curriculum in English, mathematics and, more broadly, in other subjects. You described how local authority advisers hold useful 'challenging conversations', which help you to prioritise the actions you take to improve the school. Support and training to help governors to hone their skills have also been useful.

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

Yours sincerely

**Catherine Old**

**Her Majesty's Inspector**