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Claire Claydon
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Claydon

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Gusford Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 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, governors and the trust 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.

The school should take further action to:

- accelerate the progress of pupils, particularly in mathematics
- ensure that teachers provide pupils with effective guidance as to how to improve their work and what they need to do next
- ensure that teachers have consistently high expectations of the pride pupils take in their written work.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, the school business manager, pupils, the multi-academy trust director of primary standards, and representatives from the governing body to discuss the actions

taken since the last inspection. The school improvement and action plans were evaluated. Members of the senior leadership team accompanied the lead inspector on a learning walk in key stages 1 and 2. A scrutiny of pupils' work was undertaken by the inspector with the subject leaders for English and mathematics. The outcomes of monitoring activities, impact of performance management and documentation relating to assessment and safeguarding were also considered.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been considerable changes to staffing. An interim executive headteacher led the school immediately following the previous inspection. You took up your position as headteacher in September 2017 at the same time as a new school business manager. Eight new teachers joined the school at the same time as you, four of whom were newly qualified teachers. In January 2018, you and your governors appointed a new deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher, who also lead English and mathematics respectively. In essence, over a third of your teaching staff are new and the whole leadership team has changed from the previous inspection.

Main findings

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was asked to improve leadership and management by ensuring that pre-employment checks were being followed correctly before appointing new members of staff. There were inconsistencies in safeguarding practices that needed to be identified and dealt with quickly.

The second area identified for improvement in the previous inspection report was to improve teaching and pupils' progress in key stages 1 and 2. This improvement point particularly related to ensuring better outcomes for disadvantaged and the most able pupils, and to raising teachers' expectations in science. A review of the use of additional funding to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils was also required and has taken place.

Leaders and governors have put in place plans to address all of the areas and others that have been identified since the new leadership team joined the school. Plans are appropriate, if not as explicit enough about the proportions of pupils that leaders expect will make better progress within a specific timeframe. The plans are monitored by the senior leadership team, governing body and the school's achievement team. Leaders recognise that there are some areas of improvement that still need to be tackled and which they have identified since the previous inspection.

A thorough review of safeguarding has been undertaken by the trust. New procedures have been put in place led by the newly appointed, experienced school business manager. Governors regularly assess the appropriateness of the checks made before new appointments are completed. Those seen during the inspection

showed a marked difference to those that were carried out prior to September 2017. Evidence that identified gaps in the required information have been addressed quickly and checked by you and the trust governor responsible for safeguarding was also seen during the inspection.

You and your new team have prioritised ensuring that teaching, learning and assessment are improving in all classes. You have astutely employed additional resources to ensure that identified priorities are being addressed. However, due to the many changes that have taken place, most of which began in September 2017, the impact of some of the actions taken is very clearly demonstrated in some areas but not in others. For example, writing has improved considerably in every class. Evidence is clear in pupils' books that an increasing proportion of pupils make good progress from their varying starting points. Leaders made the decision to raise the profile of writing and to celebrate pupils' work. Good-quality writing is displayed on walls in almost every corridor. Pupils see themselves as authors showing their growing breadth of reading experience as they incorporate different techniques in their writing. One example among many was: 'Dangling precariously on their damaged hinges, battered open lockers revealed tattered coats and up-ended bags full of school things, abandoned by their owners.' However, pupils do not always take sufficient pride or care in their written work.

The quality of learning in the classrooms seen during this inspection was effective. Pupils were engaged in their learning, keen to participate and answer questions, and talked animatedly to their classmates about the work they are doing. Teachers set high expectations, build on pupils' previous knowledge and skills and approach writing tasks through innovative starting points. This is beginning to be seen in other subjects, such as history and geography. For example, in one classroom, pupils were encouraged to look back at stories they had written on the Egyptians to support the writing of a story in their new topic about the Anglo-Saxons. There is little difference in the quality of writing in these subjects when compared to the work in pupils' English books. Pupils' work seen during this inspection showed that the most able and disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, typically make good progress in a variety of subjects.

However, progress is not yet as secure in mathematics. Leaders have identified many gaps in pupils' learning, which are being filled as pupils progress through the school. At key stage 2, however, progress is still not rapid enough. Leaders recognise that this is due to teachers' lack of confidence in teaching some aspects of mathematics, for example fractions. Also, some teachers are not as adept at guiding pupils in their next steps in mathematics as they are in English. Improvement plans show the support that individual teachers have already had and the impact this has had. There is still some way to go, however, until the teaching of mathematics is consistent, particularly in key stage 2.

The last area that the school was asked to improve was teachers' expectations of pupils' work in science. Opportunities to work with the local secondary school

science specialist have undoubtedly supported the subject leader's and teachers' confidence in teaching some aspects of science. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers are planning the curriculum more thoroughly and tackling some aspects of science in topic lessons. The school's improvement plans state that a new curriculum will be in place for September that identifies regular, discrete teaching of science throughout all year groups. The scheme that leaders have selected is one that they are familiar with and have seen the impact of in their previous schools.

External support

Governors, supported by the trust, took decisive action following that inspection and successfully recruited you, who worked with the interim executive headteacher to ensure a smooth transition. You were also involved in all appointments for September 2017.

The trust has put in place appropriate support to ensure that progress against the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection was tracked carefully. You also identified an external provider that you had successfully worked with in your previous school, to focus teachers' attention on increasing progress. Opportunities to work with a curriculum specialist, from a primary school within the trust, have undoubtedly supported the subject leader's and teachers' confidence in teaching some aspects of science. Much work has been done between the school and schools in the multi-academy trust, and with other local schools, for example in moderating teachers' judgements of pupils' work.

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

Yours sincerely

Ruth Brock
Her Majesty's Inspector