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J Galvin
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Dear Mr Galvin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Petworth CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 July 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.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that it receives all the funding available to support the learning of disadvantaged pupils
- ensure the consistency of provision and outcomes for pupils in all classes.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. You led me on two tours of the school and we observed learning jointly in all classes with the deputy headteacher. I met a group of six Year 5 pupils and spoke with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Chichester. I held a meeting with four members of staff and observed a cello assembly.

Context

Since the previous inspection there have been several changes to the teaching staff. All vacancies have been filled so that there is a complete team for the new year. The school has recruited well for the September 2018 intake so that Reception is full and there is a waiting list.

Main findings

You provided me with ample evidence that work is well underway to ensure that the school is judged to be good at its next inspection. You have rightly focused considerable effort and attention on improving the quality of teaching. You have been determined to demonstrate to staff where there are shortcomings in their practice. You hold them to account but do so in a compassionate and sensitive manner. Your deputy headteacher contributes extremely well to this process. You work well as a team. Staff appreciate this collaborative approach. They feel empowered by the leadership you demonstrate. It motivates and inspires them to do their best in the service of the children.

Outcomes are improving over time. With rare exception, in the most recent round of key stage 1 tests, as yet unpublished, there has been an improvement in the results compared with 2017. Children achieve well in the early years so that an above-average proportion attain a good level of development by the end of Reception. Focused teaching in phonics ensures that the large majority of pupils meet the required standard in the phonics screening check. Standards are rising across key stage 2 so that year on year the proportions of pupils attaining age-related expectations is increasing.

However, this is not a school that focuses only on outcomes in standardised tests. The school makes a very positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is aided in this by the overt Christian ethos that derives from its foundation as a Church of England school. Pupils have access to a reflection garden and an 'eco garden'. In these settings, and the forest school, they are able to consider their own thoughts and feelings, and learn about and care for the environment.

Pupils also benefit from direct teaching and opportunities to explore their creativity. The products of their work in art, notably sculptures, are displayed in all parts of the school. During the inspection, Year 3 were working with a sculptor. Other pupils performed pieces of music, and played enthusiastically on cellos for their parents in a special assembly. Leaders ensure that design and technology lessons are purposeful and have led, in the current year, to pupils building a large Viking ship on the field. This is a good example of how teachers and pupils work well together. Adults did the groundwork for the structure at a weekend. Pupils applied newly acquired woodworking skills to building up the model's structure.

The plans you have in place for tackling the remaining areas requiring improvement are suitable. We discussed the key milestones over the next year, by when you will need to have evidence of specific achievements. For example, we agreed that you would need to be sure that necessary changes to staffing have bedded down, soon into the new year, so that all pupils are benefiting from good- or better-quality teaching over time. We also agreed that you will need to review the school's evaluation of its own performance against the validated national data when it is released in November. This is so that you have clear evidence, externally moderated, that the pupils are doing much better now than previously.

Your systems for tracking and monitoring the progress of pupils have continued to improve since the inspection. You now have good access, in a timely manner, to accurate information that you, and the staff, can use to plan learning effectively. There is clear evidence in most teachers' work that they are taking account well of their pupils' starting points. This means that teaching is generally organised to meet individual pupils' needs. Adults capture new learning in the early years so that, daily, a profile is developing of what each child knows, understands and can do. This builds on the strong work already underway at the time of the last inspection. The early years is a particular area of strength in the school.

The early years leader is one of a strong group of curriculum leaders. The group work well as a team. They share a passion for teaching and the desire to try out new ideas and strategies. Sensibly, they keep all innovations under review. They dispense quickly with any that turn out not to be successful for the pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants have good models for their own work. There is a palpable atmosphere of cooperation among the staff so that an appropriate professional culture of dialogue is in place. It is this culture that is contributing to the relentless drive to improve the school in the interests of the pupils.

Much of this drive comes from the staff's compassion and care for the pupils. There has been no loss of commitment to the well-being of the pupils, while the need to raise standards has been foremost in leaders' work. Pupils are both safe and happy at the school. They are polite, courteous and respectful of themselves and each other. They play well together with a wide range of equipment at play and lunch times. Pupils' attendance is good. Leaders keep a sharp focus on any emerging patterns of absence. They are keen that no pupils miss time at school.

External support

You have benefited from the wise and measured counsel of your school improvement advisor. This support was arranged by the local authority as part of its programme for schools that require improvement. You have responded professionally to challenges presented by senior officers in the local authority. You know your school well and what else is needed to help it improve further. You have actively sought support from schools in the Rother Valley area and in your own locality. This support has enabled teachers to test the accuracy of their assessment

and how their pupils' work compares with that of pupils in other schools. Consequently teachers are able to conclude that their assessment is valid and reliable. Governance has been strengthened by the review of the governing body that was recommended at the last inspection. Governors share your accurate reflection on the school's performance and are undertaking appropriate training so that they can support you more expertly and challenge the school's work even more skilfully.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector