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Mr Simon Trahern
Jolesfield CofE Primary School
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Dear Mr Trahern

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Jolesfield CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 October 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. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in July 2017, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- improve pupils' spelling and their recall of multiplication tables
- ensure that pupils reach the high standards/greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics
- develop subject leaders so that they contribute to the development of the wider curriculum and assessment of its impact on pupils' progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the governing body and the local authority link adviser to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The inspector also met with parents before school and spoke to pupils during visits to lessons, as well as meeting a group of pupils formally.

The inspector visited all classes alongside the headteacher and looked at samples of pupils' work. The school improvement plans were evaluated. Other school information was scrutinised, including pupils' outcomes and documentation relating to the work of the governing body. The school's single central record was checked, and discussions were held about the school's work to safeguard pupils, in and out of school.

Context

Since the last inspection, the changes in staffing have continued. The current headteacher joined the school in January 2018 and the deputy headteacher in September 2017. In addition, there have been several staff changes in key stage 2.

Main findings

Since his arrival, the headteacher, ably supported by his deputy headteacher, has worked with determination and energy to drive up standards throughout the school. He has a very good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement and is acting swiftly to address these. He has, sensibly, taken advice and made good use of the support that has been provided by the local authority and other schools. Alongside the deputy headteacher, he has overseen improvements in pupils' attainment in national tests at the end of key stage 2. He has created well-considered plans for further school improvement that are sharply focused on the remaining areas of weakness.

The leadership team has, rightly, focused on improving the consistency of teaching across the school so that all groups of pupils make the same consistently strong progress. This approach has shown some success, but leaders are acutely aware of the need to embed the changes that they have introduced so that pupils' progress is more consistently built on. Teachers have been supported well to develop their skills to plan and teach writing and mathematics successfully. School information and provisional key stage 2 results indicate that this improved teaching is successful overall. However, some pupils still need to make more rapid progress in order to catch up from previous weak teaching. Consequently, currently not enough pupils attain the higher standards at key stage 2.

The headteacher has introduced new, simple guidelines and 'non-negotiables' to support teachers and teaching assistants in their day-to-day work, for example to

ensure that classrooms are fully inclusive and to use displays to support pupils' learning. These initiatives are showing positive initial impacts.

The headteacher is increasing the expectations for pupils across the school by staff and by pupils themselves. Pupils recognise that they are expected to do more thinking for themselves. They welcome this because, as they told me, it shows them that they 'can do it really'. However, during our learning walk it was clear that many pupils still automatically ask for help rather than trying to work something out for themselves. Leaders are aware of this and are working to develop pupils' approaches to their own learning so that they are no longer as reliant on adult support as in the past.

Leaders have also prioritised securing pupils' basic spelling and mathematical knowledge. Leaders recognise that weaknesses in pupils' spelling and their recall of mathematical tables remain an issue throughout the school. These weaknesses are holding pupils back later in their learning. Leaders have sensibly adopted a simple, proven system for teaching and learning spellings that should have a positive impact when teachers use it consistently and it has had longer to develop. Leaders are monitoring this closely. Leaders have also supported teachers to ensure that multiplication tables are routinely taught and checked.

The adoption of a structured approach to improve writing has also been successful, but pupils have not caught up from the legacy of weak provision and some still have significant gaps, including with spelling and punctuation. Pupils told me about the changes to their writing lessons and were extremely positive about them. In particular, they like the move from 'worksheets with gaps to fill in' to 'being allowed to write our ideas and use our imaginations'. However, the fundamental weaknesses in sentence structure and punctuation are holding even the most imaginative pupils back.

The new assessment and monitoring system has been designed to be simple to use and to show quickly where pupils might need extra help. It has not been in use for long enough to see its impact, but leaders are confident that it will help to ensure that pupils catch up. Leaders are using this system to support teachers well when they need to fill pupils' gaps. Governors use it well to hold leaders to account. School information from external checks in the summer term indicates that teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment are accurate at each key stage.

Developing the delivery of the wider curriculum is, rightly, an area of focus for the headteacher. He is working closely with staff to ensure that pupils get a broad and balanced curriculum that prepares pupils well for their next steps and life in modern Britain. The quality of subject leadership to support this development remains variable. Some areas have been very successful. For example, the work to develop art has raised the subject's profile across the school, alongside developing pupils' knowledge and skills well. However, some subject leaders must still develop their leadership skills so that they are able to monitor the success of their initiatives

across the school confidently. This includes holding others to account and assessing the impact of developments on pupils' progress throughout the school.

External support

School leaders make very good use of the support provided by the local authority. For example, the local authority school link adviser has brokered effective support from the local mathematics hub. She has also worked closely with staff to help to improve their teaching of writing. Additionally, she has provided leadership support to the headteacher and ensured that he receives good-quality support from a local headteacher.

The local authority and diocese have also provided strong support for the local governing body. This support has developed governors' skills well. For example, working with the headteacher, they have recently reshaped the school's vision and ensured that all their work aligns to this and that they fulfil their statutory obligations. The support has also helped them to become more strategic in their approach to school improvement. This has been successful, and governors are monitoring the impact of school improvement work closely and holding leaders to account well.

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

Lucy English
Her Majesty's Inspector