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Mrs Theresa Alford
Field Place Infant School
Nelson Road
Worthing
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Dear Mrs Alford

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Field Place Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 28 November 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 October 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:

- develop consistently strong teaching, learning and assessment so that all pupils make good progress
- ensure that a larger proportion of pupils reach greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics
- develop subject leaders so that they contribute to the accurate assessment of pupils' learning, especially in key stage 1.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, including the chair, and with the local authority's link adviser, by telephone, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The inspector also spoke with pupils during lessons and met with a group of pupils formally.

The inspector visited all classes alongside the deputy headteacher and looked at samples of pupils' work. The school improvement plans were evaluated. Other information was scrutinised, including the school's own records of pupils' outcomes and documentation related 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, there have been further changes to staffing. The leadership team has been widened with the addition of coordinators for key stage 1 and the early years foundation stage. New governors have joined the governing body.

Main findings

The leadership team has demonstrated both determination and precision in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. Its members have worked closely with the local authority's link advisers and made good use of this support to improve the school. As a result of this detailed and systematic approach, leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and remaining weaknesses of the school and have put in place well-considered actions to address those aspects still requiring improvement. Success is evident in the improvements in pupils' attainment in every year group, especially for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Leaders took swift action to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. They changed the structure of the school day and introduced clear routines to reduce the loss of learning time. This had an immediate impact on pupils' progress. It also provided a clearer structure for teachers so that they could spend their time planning learning activities rather than working out when to fit topics in. Pupils told me that they like the new routines that have been established, such as the 'fast learning' of their number bonds. One pupil told me that 'it gets your brain thinking and you get better at it'.

Leaders have, rightly, focused on improving the quality and consistency of teaching across the school so that all groups of pupils make consistently strong progress. The professional development of staff has been a priority and leaders have worked

closely with teachers and learning support assistants to strengthen their skills. In particular, they have developed a clear approach to planning learning activities that match the needs of all pupils. This has been effective. Staff are energised by the renewed focus on their teaching practice and its impact on pupils' progress. I observed some lessons where the clarity of purpose helped to move pupils' learning on quickly. Leaders are acutely aware that this work needs to continue so that it becomes fully embedded throughout the school.

Leaders are also increasing expectations for what pupils can achieve across the school. The new approach to planning makes sensible use of externally available programmes of study that teachers adapt to meet the specific needs of their pupils. As a consequence, teachers have introduced topics and learning earlier than they have done previously and can see that pupils are now making greater progress. Teachers also plan additional learning activities so that pupils can move on if they grasp a concept or area of learning quickly. Pupils use these opportunities well. Some told me that they cannot have an 'easy lesson' if they can already do the work because they have to do the more challenging tasks. However, some pupils' books indicate that tasks set by their teachers do not move them on when they are ready. Some pupils undertake tasks that they have already secured, for example learning how to leave finger spaces in their writing when they are already doing this consistently. This hinders their progress.

Leaders have also introduced a new curriculum to ensure that all pupils have a broad and balanced education that prepares them well for their next steps. Pupils enjoy the wide range of reading books that they use and the different topics they study as part of the wider curriculum. Early indications regarding pupils' progress across this wider curriculum are positive but this work needs to be fully embedded. Subject leaders have a clearer remit now. They explained to me how they monitor their aspects of the curriculum and hold colleagues to account for delivering it as planned. However, they need to continue to monitor the developments in their subject areas, adapting as required, to ensure that the curriculum is delivered consistently and as planned. External support has been secured to develop this aspect of middle leaders' work.

Too few Year 2 pupils attained greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics in the end of key stage 1 assessments, in 2018. The new curriculum and approach to planning has raised teachers' expectations. However, leaders are aware that the evidence base, to demonstrate aspects of pupils' learning, was not secure last year and there were some weaknesses in teachers' assessment practice. Leaders have worked well with external advisers, including those from the local authority, to address this. Leaders are working to ensure that the new curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to apply their learning and demonstrate their attainment. They have also secured partnerships so that middle leaders can learn from middle leaders in other schools to support the moderation of teachers' assessments throughout the year.

The work to improve the early years provision has been very effective. Staff plan well together and create fun play activities from which they draw children's learning effectively. Children are happy and settle quickly, partly because of the good communication with parents and carers. In 2018, a higher proportion of children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, attained a good level of development than in previous years. Leaders are, rightly, continuing to review the impact of their work and finesse it, as needed.

Governors have also benefited from external support and training. They have ensured that the governing body has a wide skills base and uses this to hold leaders to account well. Governors have a good understanding of the school and have made strategic use of the local authority's advisers to help them validate the information presented by leaders. They understand the barriers to learning of different groups of pupils and hold leaders to account well for the use of the pupil premium. This work was highly effective last year, with pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds making strong progress and attaining in line with other pupils nationally.

External support

Leaders have made good use of the support provided by the local authority. The link advisers have visited regularly and helped to refine the school's improvement plans and evaluate their impact. The local authority has also brokered support from a local infant school to support the development of middle leaders and the moderation of teachers' assessments. Leaders also work well with the local authority's 'locality groups' of neighbouring headteachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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