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Mrs Dianne Holcroft
Wargrave CofE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Holcroft

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wargrave CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 February 2019, 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:

- enhance the skills of leaders in subjects other than English and mathematics, so that they can improve teaching and learning across the curriculum
- take further action to maintain and build upon recent improvements to teaching writing, so that standards continue to rise and more pupils reach greater depth
- include in the school's improvement plan more precise success criteria which focus on pupils' outcomes.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher, a representative of the local authority and the chair of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. You accompanied me on a learning walk and I took the opportunity to talk to pupils and look at their work. We analysed a selection of books from pupils in all classes. I met with the leader responsible for English and a group of middle leaders in other subjects. I scrutinised a range of documents relating to pupils' progress, records on your checks on the quality of teaching, governors' minutes and documents connected with safeguarding. I met with the virtual school headteacher.

Context

Since the previous inspection, you have established a new senior leadership team which has contributed positively to an improving picture of effectiveness. You have established a close partnership with an outstanding school, which you also lead as executive headteacher. This has benefited staff in developing their skills by working collaboratively with other professionals. A new chair of the governing body has been appointed.

Main findings

Since your appointment, shortly before the previous inspection, you have shared your vision and high aspirations for the school with staff and governors. You lead an enthusiastic and hardworking team of staff who place pupils' learning and well-being at the heart of their actions. Teachers are particularly enthusiastic about the training and support that they receive to improve their skills. They value opportunities to work collaboratively within school and with the partnership school. As a result of well-planned training, you have improved the quality of teaching. Standards have risen in English and mathematics and progress is now in line with national averages. Pupils' progress in writing has improved rapidly.

Leaders and governors have a detailed and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas to develop. You have used this information to plan appropriate actions to address the areas for development identified at the previous inspection. You and your leadership team have put in place well-planned systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of your actions. You check to ensure that staff training is having a positive impact on raising standards. Very detailed development plans for English and mathematics identify the current improvement priorities. However, although your plans include precise details about actions, resources and timings, some success statements do not have measurable targets for pupils' achievements in mathematics and English.

Since the previous inspection, you have put in place successful strategies to improve the quality of teaching writing. Standards in writing have risen. You and

your staff are aspirational to improve standards in writing still further, particularly for the most able pupils. Within school and across the partnership, teachers share good practice to develop the teaching of writing still further.

In the early years, staff plan plenty of opportunities to develop children's early writing skills. Children's workbooks show that they make good progress from their starting points. Staff check children's learning carefully and regularly. They use these checks to plan next steps for children to ensure that they continue to make good progress.

Across the school, you have developed a consistent, well-planned approach to teaching writing. Skilled leaders have high expectations for what pupils can achieve, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff ensure that pupils write very frequently and for a purpose, including in subjects such as science and history. Teachers plan exciting and engaging lessons which help pupils develop as confident and enthusiastic writers. Staff use interesting and engaging texts and novels to fire pupils' imagination. Pupils write with precision and skill. In lessons, teachers share good models for writing and this means that pupils are confident about what high-quality writing looks like. As a result, pupils are able to edit and improve their own writing with accuracy.

Pupils' workbooks show that they develop their skills and knowledge in grammar, punctuation and spelling and apply these in their independent writing. Staff intervene quickly to address pupils' errors and misconceptions. Staff place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' range and knowledge of vocabulary. Pupils read a wide range of quality texts, both fiction and non-fiction. Staff develop pupils' understanding of new and unfamiliar vocabulary.

Leaders and staff make frequent checks on pupils' learning and progress in writing. Staff use questioning in lessons to check pupils' understanding. Teachers show pupils, including the most able, how to improve their writing further. They plan additional support for pupils when needed. For example, teachers provide time for pupils with SEND to practise their skills in spelling and grammar. Teachers give most-able pupils additional challenge to help them make the strong progress of which they are capable. This is starting to have an impact and the proportion of pupils reaching greater depth in writing is improving.

As a result of the improvements that you have made, pupils, including those with SEND, develop as confident writers. You and the English subject leader keep a careful check on improvements to the teaching of writing to check that staff training is having the impact that it should, and to ensure that standards continue to rise.

You have rightly concentrated on improving outcomes for pupils in English and mathematics. Subject leadership has improved rapidly in these subjects. However, you have not lost sight of the importance of building an engaging curriculum. Leaders of other subjects, some of whom are new to their leadership roles, are

developing their skills. You provide them with a range of training, such as working with professionals from your partnership school and other settings. Staff told me how much they appreciate these opportunities. Leaders in other subjects, including geography, modern foreign languages and art, are working with you to develop teaching and learning across different subject areas.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support to the school in raising standards. Staff have benefited from the partnership with an outstanding school. The local authority knows the school well and is now of the opinion that you and your leadership team need less and less support.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector