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Mrs Jillian Hine
Headteacher
St Margaret's Church of England Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hine

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Margaret's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 November 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken 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 three 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:

- develop the curriculum in the foundation subjects, building upon the work already completed in science, history and geography
- ensure that subject leaders exercise their full responsibilities for the content, skills and sequencing of learning in their subjects
- strengthen governors' skills so that they can monitor the school more effectively.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, members of your senior team, subject leaders and a group of staff. I also met two members of the governing body and a

representative of the local authority. A group of pupils from Years 5 and 6 came to a meeting with me to talk to me about the school and their work. I visited all classes, including Nursery. I heard pupils in Years 1 and 2 read to you. I reviewed pupils' books in lessons and scrutinised a representative work sample. A range of documentation was considered, including minutes from governors' meetings, analysis of pupil premium funding and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection in July 2018, a number of changes have been made in the school. Two assistant headteachers have been appointed internally to lead English and mathematics across the school. Subject leaders for computing, science, history and geography have been appointed from within the staff. Nursery now has its own manager and a new leader of Reception Year has been appointed. One member of staff has left the school. A new chair and vice-chair of governors have been elected to the governing body.

Main findings

You and your leadership team have taken decisive and thoughtful action to improve the school since the last inspection. Leadership has been strengthened at all levels, including in Nursery and Reception Year. Governance is now more effective. Teaching is improving, especially in reading and writing, and a broader and better sequenced curriculum for all pupils is beginning to take shape, particularly in history, geography and science.

Careful prioritisation of crucial changes is helping to maintain staff's positive outlook and well-being. You have made sure that initiatives to improve the school are not short-lived or confusing. You are wisely taking a long-term view of school improvement, so that change can be sustained and make a difference to pupils' quality of education.

Reliable and more accurate assessment of pupils' achievement has helped teachers to plan the right learning in the right order for pupils, including the most able. In addition, governors now get to see more accurate information about pupils' results and feel more confident about asking incisive questions. However, new governors have correctly identified that they need to further develop their skills and experience, especially the role they play in overseeing the school's curriculum and quality of education.

You and your leadership team monitor teaching more closely than previously, but in a supportive way that does not create unnecessary workload for staff. Teamwork and timely advice are proving helpful to class teachers and teaching assistants. Their confidence and morale have been restored.

Senior leaders take a more active approach to checking the learning of pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders work alongside staff in lessons and have successfully raised the profile of these potentially vulnerable pupils across the whole school. As a result, the school is an even more inclusive place. Staff have learned a lot about what pupils need to learn to be well prepared for the next stage in their education. All staff agree that there is a greater sense of accountability. Leaders and governors make sure they spend pupil premium funding effectively. Teachers plan to meet the needs and abilities of pupils in their classes. Teaching assistants feel that their work with pupils is valued. They carry out their work successfully when leading nurture programmes and supporting pupils with their work.

The quality of pupils' learning in English has improved under the restructured leadership. Right from the start in Nursery, a sharper focus on communication with rhymes, stories and phonics is leading to children's secure development and preparation for school. You have introduced a different phonics programme throughout the school, with the express aim of ensuring better consistency. Teachers, teaching assistants and pupils, especially in Reception Year, have fully embraced the change and are delighted in the progress pupils are making. Staff make sure that pupils get to practise reading books that include the sounds they have learned. They enjoy storytimes in school that motivate them to listen and stimulate their imagination. Innovative methods of encouraging parents and carers to read with their children have made a significant impact. For example, the school recently hosted a well-attended 'bedtime reading' evening event for parents and children. They came to school – some in pyjamas – and had a pleasant and informative time learning about how to enjoy reading with their children at home.

Further up the school, pupils know that the books they study in class are chosen to extend their vocabulary and challenge them. They are helped by their teachers to practise inference and deduction skills and build up their comprehension when studying more difficult texts. Pupils love reading and all have opportunities to read on a daily basis. The older pupils in Year 6 also contribute to the school's lively reading culture by reading regularly with the Reception children.

Pupils have opportunities to write at length and can talk confidently about how they bring together their knowledge and skills to form pieces of memorable writing, including how they adapt to different styles. Pupils enjoy writing and see its purpose and intrinsic value. Pupils also talked to me about how they appreciate the time they have to practise and revisit topics in mathematics so that they feel confident when working out problems using their reasoning skills. Pupils really appreciate how staff help them to learn and enjoy school. They told me how teachers, 'make sure we understand, before we have a go at doing it ourselves'. Other pupils said that staff 'bring us up' because they teach pupils how to be polite, kind and respectful.

Nevertheless, the school's outcomes at the end of key stage 2, especially in reading and writing, are disappointing and have been so for some time. Although real

improvements can be seen in early years and key stage 1, older pupils' achievement is lagging behind because of weaker teaching in the past. You and your team of staff are all working purposefully to improve the overall quality of education. You are realistic and know that there is much left to do.

External support

You have made effective use of the support offered by the local authority, particularly in English. You have forged a close link with an outstanding school, enabling staff to learn from good practice and share ideas. As a result, expectations have been raised and staff are more aspirational for their pupils. A national leader of education is also providing crucial advice for you and your team of leaders.

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

Janet Pearce

Her Majesty's Inspector