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Mrs Lisa Bracken
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bracken

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Hatherden Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 and 5 February 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in July 2019. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Lambert
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in July 2019

- Urgently review and sharpen safeguarding arrangements to ensure that:
 - leaders and staff fully understand safeguarding requirements and ensure that statutory processes are in place
 - record keeping is systematic, detailed and methodical
 - governors keep rigorous oversight of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and their implementation.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - strengthening school improvement planning and the rigour of leaders' self-evaluation
 - ensuring that the curriculum in a wide range of subjects is well led and well developed, enabling pupils to build upon their prior knowledge and skills
 - improving leaders' analysis of how well pupils are learning
 - ensuring that pupil premium plans focus on providing effective support so that disadvantaged pupils make better academic progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - establishing a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics and writing so that pupils, especially boys and those with SEND, make progress in line with that of other pupils with similar starting points
 - providing pupils with high-quality feedback on how they can improve their work, in line with the school's assessment policy
 - enhancing teachers' subject knowledge.
- Improve pupils' progress in writing and mathematics, as well as in a range of subjects in the wider curriculum so that:
 - pupils' subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects are strengthened
 - a greater proportion of pupils reach the expected standards in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6, including boys and pupils with SEND.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how well this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 4 to 5 February 2020

Evidence

Alongside leaders, inspectors visited lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, subject leaders and groups of pupils. Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted to Ofsted via the Parent View website. Inspectors met with representatives from the local authority and diocese. The lead inspector met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the interim headteacher, four teachers and one member of support staff have left the school. A new headteacher and the early years leader started in September 2019. At the time of this inspection, two out of the four classes were being taught by interim teachers.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Urgent changes to safeguarding procedures have been rapidly enacted. This has led to substantial improvements. Staff, governors and leaders have received useful training. They now identify and share concerns about pupils' welfare with greater confidence. Systems for recording and reporting concerns to leaders have improved and are used well. However, leaders do not always record the specific actions taken to keep pupils safe. This means that key information cannot be quickly collated and shared when needed.

Most statutory criminal and professional checks on staff and governors are completed. This ensures that adults in school are suitable to work with children. Recording of this information is now thorough and clear. However, leaders and governors do not understand the purpose of some of the checks. As a result, checks used are not always suitable for the roles that different staff, volunteers and governors undertake.

Leaders have taken appropriate action to improve security arrangements. New procedures now prevent free access to the school, meaning that only known and vetted adults have access to the site and pupils.

Leaders have reviewed and improved the English and mathematics curriculums. Series of lessons now help pupils to learn agreed knowledge and concepts. Improvements are having a greater impact on younger children and pupils. These pupils are now taught new content in a clearer and more logical manner. Misunderstandings are picked up and addressed rapidly by staff. These pupils are achieving well. Some older pupils, however, have significant gaps in their knowledge because provision has been weak in the past. There is more to do to address these.

Leaders have prioritised the development of the core English and mathematics curriculums. However, other subjects are not sufficiently well planned or organised. While a wide range of subjects are taught, the content and sequence of these is left to individual staff. This means that teaching is rarely linked to pupils' previous learning and often haphazard. Work to address this has already begun. Links have been made with a local teaching school to support staff in developing the school's curriculum. There is more to do to consider the aims, end points and sequence of the curriculum and then to implement it.

Having considered the recommendations of the pupil premium review, leaders and governors have focused their efforts on supporting this group of pupils to achieve better. Leaders have raised the level of attendance of disadvantaged pupils. This means these pupils are now in school more often and miss fewer lessons. Leaders have also reviewed the systems to check that these pupils are on track with their learning. Staff, leaders and governors now identify individuals and groups of pupils who fall behind with greater efficiency. However, some older disadvantaged pupils are not receiving the support they need to catch up with their peers.

The headteacher has reviewed and improved the processes for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils' needs are carefully considered in collaboration with parents and staff. Appropriate plans are developed to help pupils to overcome their barriers to learning. These include a range of initiatives and adaptations that are bespoke to the individual pupils and their needs. Pupils with SEND are able to access all aspects of the school curriculum. However, these pupils are not yet achieving as well as they could due to weaknesses in the curriculum.

The effectiveness of leadership and management at the school

Leaders have acted with urgency to understand and address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Plans for improvement are sharply focused, carefully followed, and prioritise leaders' actions well. Leaders draw on the expertise of other schools, the local authority and staff to ensure that targets are met. Several staff are temporary or new to post. This means that a capable but small group of leaders are charged with securing a wide range of improvements.

Governors recognise that the school still has weaknesses that need addressing. They have set about reviewing and rebuilding their approach and structure using the recommendations from the review of governance. This has resulted in the governing body becoming more strategic in its approach and better placed to hold leaders to account. Governors have sought the support from external partners. This provides them with expert and impartial guidance and evaluation. They have a more accurate view of the school's effectiveness. They use this information well to allocate resources and monitor the improvements which leaders make.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders and governors possess an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and have developed plans that are securing improvements. The shared sense of purpose and direction is focused on the greatest priorities.
- Support and training from external agencies are used well. Leaders have a greater understanding of their subject areas and there are clear improvements in the English and mathematics curriculums.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Some aspects of local and national safeguarding requirements are not fully understood by staff and governors. Leaders do not always record their actions to protect children with the required precision. Some checks conducted on staff and governors are not well understood.
- The curriculum is at a very early stage of development. The aims and sequence of learning in foundation subjects is not universally agreed or understood by staff.

External support

The school has received effective support from the local authority. This has helped leaders to understand how to plan, teach and assess phonics and mathematics. Two separate safeguarding reviews have been conducted by the local authority which have helped governors and leaders to identify and rectify weaknesses in this aspect of their work. The local authority and diocese have provided training for governors, helping them to better understand their role and responsibilities. This has enabled governors to provide greater challenge to leaders and to focus on the school's most urgent priorities.