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Dear Ali Moore

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Peter's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 February 2020, 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 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:

- embed the teaching and learning of vocabulary and grammar across the curriculum
- embed pupils' problem-solving skills in mathematics
- embed pupils' understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar when writing at every key stage
- communicate the link between achievement and attendance to pupils and to parents and carers so that the rate of attendance increases
- reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, the chair of the governing body, the local authority learning adviser, curriculum leaders and teachers to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. I met formally with one group of pupils and spoke to pupils informally when observing the school's work. I listened to one group of pupils read. I conducted lesson visits and looked at work in pupils' books. I evaluated the school improvement plan.

Context

This was the first monitoring visit since the school's section 5 inspection in October 2018. In September 2019, a new interim headteacher was appointed alongside an interim deputy headteacher. In November 2019, a new curriculum leader for mathematics was appointed. Since the last inspection, a new chair of the governing body has been appointed.

Main findings

Your vision to improve pupils' academic achievements is shared by governors and all members of staff. Pupils enjoy learning at St Peter's Church of England Primary School. They relish the books they read and the challenge of the subjects they study. They also value the strength of their relationships with staff at the school. They are very proud of their school. In collaboration with the curriculum leader for English, you have revised the English curriculum. Pupils read a breadth of high-quality texts with confidence and enjoyment. Leaders and teachers use assessment information about pupils' reading knowledge well and provide additional support where necessary. Leaders have also introduced a school-wide approach to the teaching and learning of vocabulary to further improve pupils' reading skills. It is too early to judge the full impact of this approach.

You have revised the writing curriculum. It focuses on strengthening pupils' understanding of spelling, punctuation and sentence structure. Pupils edit their writing with care and attention to these areas. Pupils draw on the features they identify in their reading to improve their own writing. Consequently, pupils' writing is improving. However, you are working hard to ensure that teachers continue to embed these approaches to writing at every key stage, so that improvements are maintained.

The phonics curriculum is effective. You have embedded a consistent and successful approach to the teaching of early reading. Pupils are keen to read at both key stage 1 and early years. Pupils gain a strong understanding of the link between sounds and letters. Consequently, pupils apply this knowledge when reading texts. Leaders and staff provide appropriate support for pupils who may struggle with reading.

In collaboration with your new mathematics leader, you have revised the mathematics curriculum effectively. You have accurately identified gaps in pupils' knowledge through systematic use of pupils' assessment information. Leaders and staff have used this information to plan well-structured sequences of lessons. Leaders and staff enable pupils to learn about abstract mathematical concepts through pictorial and concrete resources. Pupils use talk well to develop their understanding. The application of their mathematical knowledge to problem solving is developing but is not yet fully embedded at all key stages.

The early years curriculum in both Nursery and Reception is strong. Children learn about the world around them through well-structured activities. They are able to develop their language skills and knowledge of early reading, writing and mathematics through exciting resources. Children are enthused about learning and are well prepared as they move into key stage 1.

Pupils' attendance is not yet in line with the national average. You have worked hard to embed incentives for pupils to attend school, as well as working with the local authority. While you have highlighted the critical link between attendance and achievement with parents and carers, attendance for too many pupils is not yet high enough.

Although most pupils behave well, the proportion of fixed-term exclusions is too high. You and your deputy headteacher have introduced additional training for staff to enable them to manage complex behaviour before it escalates. It is too early, however, to see the impact of this.

External support

You, with other leaders and staff, work very closely with the Plymouth Learning Adviser to improve the school curriculum. The reports identify areas of weakness and emerging strengths that you use to make further improvements. The school has participated in a national oracy project Voice 21. This has enabled many staff to support pupils' use of talk within lessons.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Exeter, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Plymouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Aykin

Her Majesty's Inspector