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17 November 2022

Simon Millington  
Executive Headteacher  
St James Church of England Junior School  
Upton Street  
Gloucester  
Gloucestershire  
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Dear Mr Millington

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection of St James Church of England Junior School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 12 October 2022, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, the operational headteacher, other staff, governors and the local authority the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, listened to pupils read, looked at samples of pupils' work, spoke to some pupils about their learning, reviewed curriculum documents and the school development plan. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**St James Church of England Junior School continues to require improvement. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.**

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that there is a systematic plan to secure the improvements needed in all of the wider curriculum subjects
- ensure that all governors strengthen their understanding of how well pupils learn the curriculum so they can provide the most effective support and challenge.

## **Main findings**

Since the previous inspection, the leadership structure has been strengthened. An operational headteacher is in post, working alongside the executive headteacher. Two new governors have joined the school. In September 2022, a teacher of English as an additional language was appointed to support the increasing number of pupils who do not speak English fluently. In January 2023, the school will formally federate with Hatherley Infant School.

You and your staff have raised the profile of reading in response to the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. You have introduced a new and effective early reading programme. Pupils now receive the right support to meet their needs. Leaders use assessment well to check the progress pupils make. This is helping those who have fallen behind with their reading to catch up. Your investment in age-appropriate books allows pupils to practise and consolidate their reading skills. All staff have been trained to ensure they teach the phonics programme as intended. Despite this, there remains some variation in staff expertise.

Your work to overhaul the wider curriculum is starting to have a positive impact. Many subject leaders have sharpened their focus on identifying the precise knowledge and vocabulary pupils must know and remember. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to recap their learning. This helps them retain the most important knowledge and vocabulary, particularly in mathematics and history. Nonetheless, improvements to curriculum thinking in other subjects, such as design technology and art and design, are in the early stages. This limits the progress pupils make through the whole curriculum.

You and other senior leaders have better oversight of how the curriculum is being taught. Leaders make regular checks to see what pupils know and remember. The chair and vice-chair of governors attend local authority 'project group' meetings to discuss the impact of leaders' actions to improve the school. You have recently introduced a monitoring schedule so that all governors can assure themselves of how well pupils learn the curriculum. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.

You value the guidance and support provided by local school leaders and the local authority on curriculum design. Staff are positive about the external training they receive to develop their expertise. They benefit from stronger links with the infant school. This helps to ensure the curriculum design builds on pupils' prior learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Dale Burr  
**His Majesty's Inspector**