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Sarah Kotulecki
Headteacher
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Dear Sarah Kotulecki

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Cold Harbour Church of England School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 4 May 2023, 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 two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, other leaders, 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, reviewed pupils' work, and talked to pupils and staff. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

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

Main findings

Since the previous inspection in October 2021, there has been a change to the leadership of the school. The current headteacher took up their post in April 2022. During the time since the last inspection, there has also been some turnover of teaching staff, which has caused a small delay in embedding plans for improvement. However, all new teachers and teaching assistants have now received the same subject and phonics training as existing staff.

Leaders have sharply focused on improving the teaching of early reading. There is a well-thought-out approach in place to train staff to become expert teachers of phonics. This includes both internal and external coaching and specialist support. As a result of this, teachers' knowledge of how to teach phonics has improved. They are now teaching sounds in the right order and with more confidence. However, there are still some inconsistencies in how well lesson activities in early reading are implemented by teachers. Leaders are aware of this. They monitor lessons, so that they can provide bespoke support and training as needed. This is helping to strengthen the teaching of phonics across the school.

An ambitious curriculum has been put in place, which sets out the sequenced knowledge that pupils need to learn in all subject areas. However, some of these subject plans are in place more securely than others. Leaders have deliberately chosen to focus on fully embedding a few subjects at a time. In doing so they have created a balance of making rapid improvement while not overloading teaching staff with multiple changes. As staff have not been tasked with too many changes at once, they have been able to secure their subject knowledge and refine their practice.

In the subject areas which leaders have focused on since the last inspection, teachers are confident and follow the agreed teaching strategies consistently. Leaders have trained staff on the use of effective teaching strategies to develop a consistent 'Cold Harbour' teaching approach. In these subject areas, pupils gain and remember knowledge and their work shows that they are progressing well through the curriculum. Leaders of these subject areas have worked well with the early years team to ensure the curriculum in Reception provides children with the knowledge they need to access learning when they move to Year 1.

Leaders are now applying this same improvement focus to the other foundation subjects to make sure there is improvement across the breadth of the curriculum. Leaders regularly monitor lessons and speak with staff and pupils to measure the impact of these recent changes. They use this information to then refine their support to ensure further improvement.

Leaders continue to make sure that safeguarding is a priority within the school. Staff remain knowledgeable about safeguarding and know how to spot signs that a pupil or their family may need help. Leaders take effective and swift action when responding to safeguarding concerns and detailed records provide a clear account of any concerns raised. The single central record remains compliant and is regularly monitored by leaders.

Leaders have effectively identified the actions they need to take, and in what order, to improve the school. They know the areas which still require further work and they have clarity on what they need to do next. Governors provide appropriate challenge and support. They have oversight of the progress leaders are making in their improvement plans. The local authority and an external partner for literacy have provided support to the school. Leaders have been highly receptive to this and continue to reflect upon

feedback given to improve the quality of education. Leaders and governors have found this external perspective on the work they are doing helpful in their continued efforts to raise standards.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Oxford, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Milton Keynes. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Nina Marabese
His Majesty's Inspector