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Mrs Helene Bligh
Headteacher
Hever Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
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Dear Mrs Helene Bligh

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Hever Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 01 February 2024, 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.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, other senior leaders, governors and a representative of 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 met with teachers, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, talked to pupils and scrutinised documents. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

Main findings

There have been significant changes to the leadership of the school since the previous inspection in March 2022. You took up the post of headteacher in January 2023 after a period of time in which there was a part time interim headteacher and other members of school staff filling that role. There have also been the appointments of a new assistant headteacher and many teaching staff who are relatively new to the school. You quickly recognised that outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics were falling, and the learning behaviours of pupils was worsening. You also saw that the teaching of foundation subjects was not strong enough.

Things have improved significantly over the last year. Leaders have ensured that there is consistency in the way that reading is taught across the school and there are signs that this is beginning to have an impact. Pupils are also becoming more confident and capable in mathematics due to increased opportunities to practice and because they are taught to explain how they arrive at their answers. This focus on reasoning can also be seen in pupils' work in the foundation subjects and it is strengthening the teaching of these subjects. Likewise, time spent on teaching pupils to write well is supporting their learning in foundation subjects where pupils are applying what they have learned in pieces of extended writing. Pupils are relying less on scaffolds, and they are more able to discuss their ideas and understanding of these topics.

In the Reception class, there is a well-planned mix of direct teaching and continuous provision. Leaders have considered how to meet the needs of the class as well as those of individual pupils. Activities are created and adapted to help meet these needs and children now play and learn with a greater sense of purpose.

Leaders have brought in clear principles for effective teaching and learning and these principles are starting to be apparent in lessons. For example, teachers are making good use of modelling to support their explanations. There are clear routines for learning that have helped to create a more purposeful environment in the classroom. Teachers have the knowledge of strategies to effectively support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, in the foundation subjects, the school needs to ensure that there is a stronger understanding of how to check that all pupils have the knowledge they need before moving on to a new lesson or topic.

The school has brought in a commercial curriculum to help staff teach most foundation subjects. This is being adapted to enable teaching it in a two-year cycle. This is arranged so that less experienced teachers can be supported in lesson planning by a more experienced colleague and to allow workload to be shared through collaborative planning. Teachers are making changes to make sure that pupils are still taught the prior knowledge they need to make sense of current topics. However, leaders need to ensure that important aspects of individual subjects are not overlooked.

Leaders at all levels, including governors, have a very strong understanding of the school, how it has needed to improve and how it continues to need to improve. The rapid action

plan developed for the first four terms of new leadership were highly detailed and meant that everyone knew what the priorities were and what their roles were in enacting these priorities. There is ongoing evaluation of the changes leaders have made, supported well by the local authority's school improvement advisors.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors, the director of education for the Diocese of Rochester, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Enser
His Majesty's Inspector