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24 April 2017

Mrs Deborah Pargeter  
Tithe Farm Primary School  
Tithe Farm Road  
Houghton Regis  
Dunstable  
Bedfordshire  
LU5 5JB

Dear Mrs Pargeter

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tithe Farm Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 17 March 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to ensure that there is consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across all year groups by ensuring that:

- teachers plan work which always provides challenge for all pupils, particularly the most able, so that pupils can make as much progress as they can from their starting points
- there is a consistent approach in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all year groups
- the pupil premium grant is allocated to achieve the best possible outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in all year groups.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, the chair of the governing body and five other governors, the school council, the business manager, the school's family worker and the subject leaders for science, art, computing and early years. We discussed the actions taken since the most recent inspection. The school's action plan was discussed and evaluated. Together with you and the deputy headteacher, I observed teaching in all classes. I scrutinised pupils' work in books and on display. Reports to and from governors, governors' minutes, the monitoring of teaching and learning, attendance records, documents relating to the analysis of pupil premium grant funding, the single central record and other safeguarding arrangements were also considered. I also looked at evaluations from the school's own parent questionnaires which were carried out recently.

## **Context**

You have taken on the role of interim headteacher from January 2017 during the absence of the substantive headteacher.

## **Main findings**

Since taking on the role of interim headteacher, you have concentrated on developing focused and precise plans to address the key priorities from the previous inspection findings. These include raising the standards across teaching and learning through rigorous monitoring and assessment processes and by providing the necessary and relevant support for all staff.

The school's 'Rapid Improvement Plan' very clearly sets out the school's priorities in line with the areas for improvement set out in the school's previous inspection report. This has enabled governors to take on a much more strategic role and provide effective challenge to enable them to understand the work the school is doing. Through staff performance management meetings, you have started to develop a culture of accountability among all teaching and support staff. These meetings identify training needs for all staff to help them support the pupils to make as much progress as they should. As a result, support is focused and precise and more pupils are now making better progress from their starting points.

Governors are fully informed about the work of school leaders and say that you 'welcome challenge'. They are extremely positive about the changes made since the beginning of the school year and since the recent inspection. They believe that the relationship between the headteacher, school staff and themselves is a collaborative one which has had an impact on moving the school forward. Governors are able to talk confidently about the impact improvements are having on staff well-being, the parent community and pupil achievement.

Middle leaders have risen to the challenge of taking on key areas of school improvement, as well as new subject responsibilities. All subject leaders have carried out monitoring of their subject and completed action plans. They are able to explain the strengths and the weaknesses they have found and discuss the next steps in their monitoring cycle. Staff confidence had been a barrier to the teaching of some of the subjects. However, support and training have resulted in an improvement in the quality of pupils' work across a range of subjects, particularly in science.

You have analysed the spending of the pupil premium funding and have carried out a thorough review. You identified that current spending was not having enough of an impact on the progress pupils make and there was a need to ensure that spending focuses on measurable impacts. The funding allocation has now been fully revised and you are currently in the process of allocating it to resources which will have a direct impact on supporting the needs of disadvantaged pupils.

You and the deputy headteacher have focused on the inconsistencies in teaching and learning across the school. You have established strong foundations in the early years. The new early years leader has already made a good start on ensuring the consistency of practice between the Nursery and the Reception class. Baseline assessment is thorough and there is evidence to suggest that children in Nursery and Reception make good progress from their starting points.

Rigorous monitoring by the senior leadership team ensures that inconsistencies in teaching and learning are identified early. You are ensuring that teachers regularly monitor the impact of their teaching and learning and evaluate the progress made by pupils. Because of the support you have put in place and the introduction of robust assessment systems, teachers are far more confident at assessing the progress pupils make in lessons. As a result, pupil progress meetings enable the school to identify pupils who need extra support or challenge in order to make good and better progress.

You have started to develop the practice of teaching assistants, with planned training activities to ensure that they have maximum impact on the progress of the pupils they are supporting. On my visit, I observed teaching assistants supporting pupils effectively. They know individuals well and are able to explain where pupils are in their learning. Those who support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are receiving the necessary training to help support pupils to do the best they can. This is ensuring that they make as much progress as they can from their starting points.

You have begun to embed a strong culture of values within the school. The success of this is demonstrated through pupils' attitudes to learning. Pupils are able to link values, such as being resilient, curious and reflective in their own learning. The school's 'learning friends' characters have inspired pupils to think about these values in particular. Pupils can explain how being curious in science, for example, will help

increase their knowledge and understanding of the world, and how being resilient enables them to try new things with confidence. Pupils are continually reflecting on the quality of their writing, improving as they go and redrafting elements to help improve the content. One pupil was keen to explain how she had improved in spelling, grammar and punctuation since the beginning of the year. Some teachers set high expectations of work throughout lessons, reminding pupils of punctuation expectations when writing. Pupils have aspirations and expressed their wishes to be scientists, archaeologists, accountants and teachers when they leave school.

You have established a culture of safety through assemblies and lessons. Safety online is an area pupils can talk about with confidence. All the pupils I spoke to could talk about specific assemblies which reinforced messages about the dangers of sharing information on the internet. Pupils told me that this was revisited each week in computing lessons and, consequently, they said that they felt safe when online.

Since being in post you have successfully started to move the school forward by embedding robust systems which support high standards across the school for raising achievement. You, senior leaders and governors share the vision you have for the school. Other staff have no doubt about leaders' expectations in relation to teaching and learning, which align closely with the national professional teaching standards. Through clear school development plans and monitoring and assessment systems, you have ensured that the whole school community, parents, pupils and the wider community are involved in the school's journey.

You and the leaders of the school demonstrate a relentless commitment and enthusiasm towards driving improvement. Since September, the school has made effective progress against all areas which were identified in the last inspection. You recognise that some areas of teaching and learning are still not consistently secure across the school. However, you have established secure foundations to enable the school to improve further to get to be judged good.

### **External support**

You very quickly identified specific training needs for staff, which will support the school's action to meet the areas for improvement. The local authority have already provided some staff training and are continuing with their support to assist you in moving the school forward. They are extremely positive about the improvements you have already made and are confident that the developing leadership of the school and the systems now in place will ensure that the school continues its improvement to good at the next inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Cindy Impey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**