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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Nicola Hughes
Headteacher
St John's Primary School
St John's Road
Wallingford
Oxfordshire
OX10 9AG

Dear Miss Hughes

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

Following my visit to your school on 19 May 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 March 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust 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 challenge in learning is well matched to pupils' needs.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with the headteacher and the assistant headteacher, subject leaders, the early years foundation stage leader, a representative of the trust and two governors, including the chair of governors. I visited classrooms during teaching time and looked at pupils' work. I examined a range of documents, including governors' minutes, and evaluated the school's action plan. I checked the

school's single central record of checks on staff and reviewed school information on pupils' progress, the effectiveness of teaching and learning and pupils' attendance.

Main findings

You are successfully raising staff expectations of what pupils can achieve, inspiring leaders' strong determination to improve pupils' outcomes still further.

Consequently, leaders place a firm and appropriate emphasis on improving teaching. Your recent definition of the school's policy on teaching sets high expectations for teachers. Furthermore, this is helpfully linked to the areas for improvement identified by the section 5 inspection.

You are providing regular relevant training opportunities for staff as part of a well-planned professional development programme. Teaching is improving because, as part of this, teachers have their own personalised plan for improvement linked to helpful targets and detailed feedback from senior leaders. Leaders' regular monitoring of teaching and learning is ensuring that they are better aware of where strengths and weaknesses in classroom provision lie. This allows leaders to quickly provide additional coaching and mentoring for staff, accelerating the improvement sought. Furthermore, leaders are steadily adapting the curriculum. This is beginning to enhance teachers' opportunities to challenge and engage pupils more effectively.

Teachers are making increasingly effective use of questions to challenge pupils and check their progress in lessons. However, the impact of this is not yet consistent across the school. Some activities set by teachers still prove too difficult and, as a result, some pupils lose their concentration. More remains to be done to ensure that appropriately challenging learning activities are well matched to pupils' individual needs.

Teachers' use of learning time is improving. Lessons start promptly, are paced appropriately and make good use of all learning opportunities. Leaders' review of the school timetable has ensured the best use of time across the school day. As a result, pupils' books show work of an improving quantity and quality. In the early years, children's 'busy books' show clearly the good progress some pupils are now making in developing their early writing skills.

Governors show determination in taking action to improve their effectiveness. They have undertaken recent helpful training to strengthen their ability to scrutinise pupils' progress information more effectively. Governors are becoming increasingly adept at using this developing knowledge to challenge school leaders well. This was evident in their recent strong questioning of school leaders about the progress of different groups of pupils. As a result, governors have an increasingly accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness and are therefore better able to hold leaders to account for the school's improvement.

Leaders' action plans set out clearly how they are addressing each area of school

improvement. Importantly, these plans also include appropriate timescales and state where responsibility for both delivering improvement and monitoring the success of actions taken lies. As a result, leaders and governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and how the success of their actions will be measured.

External support

The trust is providing significant, effective support to the school. School leaders receive valuable mentoring from the headteacher of an outstanding school within the trust. This expertise is bringing much-needed rigour to the school's action plans and leaders' actions. Helpful opportunities for staff to learn 'best practice' in regular trust-wide training days are clearly supporting the current improvements in teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Dom Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector