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Mrs Claire Wilson
Executive Headteacher
Leesland Church of England Controlled Infant School
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Dear Mrs Wilson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Leesland CofE Controlled Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 1 February 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

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

The school should take further action to:

- increase the proportion of pupils reaching a greater depth of learning, especially in mathematics, by maintaining pupils' current rates of progress from their increasingly secure key stage 1 starting points
- consolidate recent work to strengthen the rigour of governors' monitoring and challenge to leaders.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the associate headteacher, one of the assistant headteachers, a representative of the local authority, and groups of pupils, staff and governors. Together, we visited classrooms in all year groups, to observe

learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. We also looked together at samples of pupils' work from across all year groups. I considered a range of documentation from the school website and provided by school leaders, including your self-evaluation and school improvement plan, reports from the external reviews of pupil premium funding and governance, and information about pupils' current progress and the quality of teaching and learning in the school. I also reviewed the school's central record of recruitment checks on staff, and took into account feedback from a parent questionnaire carried out by school leaders.

Context

Since the last inspection, the assistant headteacher who leads early years provision has returned from maternity leave. Two other members of staff are currently on maternity leave. An existing member of staff has taken up a post as English leader across the federation that exists between Leesland Infant and Junior schools. A new assistant headteacher has joined the school, who has responsibility for inclusion across the federation. There is a new chair of the governing body in post, and a number of other governors are new to the school.

Main findings

You and your team have moved forward with determination since the school was last inspected. You have used the areas identified for improvement from the last inspection as a useful prompt to step back and focus strategically on the difference your work is making to pupils' learning. Staff clearly understand the priorities for improvement, and are motivated to develop the quality of their work across the school, so that pupils achieve as well as they can. The impact of leaders' actions is evident from the notably improved outcomes that pupils achieved by the end of the last academic year. The proportions of pupils reaching at least the expected national benchmarks in early years, Year 1 phonics and by the end of key stage 1 are now at least average. This represents a sustained improving trend in pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics over time. Current pupils' work showed us that this upward trend is continuing this year.

You recognise that, when children join the school in early years, many have skills and knowledge below what might be expected for their age. With this in mind, you have invested thoughtfully and carefully in developing the early years environment, particularly the outside space. Opportunities for children to engage with learning, and especially mark-making and early writing, are everywhere. Adults encourage and celebrate children's attempts at writing, and track the stepping-stones of their development closely. This helps them to target additional support where it is needed to move children's learning on more quickly. Although by the end of the last academic year children's writing was not quite as well developed as their reading and mathematics skills, a higher proportion reached the early learning goal for writing than was seen nationally.

You and your associate headteacher recognise that, as standards in early years increase, teachers' expectations of what pupils in key stage 1 can achieve need to rise. This is so that pupils are challenged sufficiently by their learning and continue to make secure progress as a result. You make effective use of pupil progress meetings to ensure that teachers know pupils' specific needs well, and plan work that builds appropriately on their learning over time. Staff adopt a consistent approach to learning across each year group, which was evident when we visited lessons in key stage 1. In Year 2, for example, pupils in all three classes were solving number problems involving coins. While some used a 'trial and error' approach, others were encouraged to work more methodically by 'exchanging' coins, and others were introduced to using multiples in the number sentences they were producing. This helped those pupils who were ready to deepen their understanding. Maintaining this focus on deepening learning, especially in mathematics, will be vital in ensuring that pupils continue to make secure progress, so that more of them achieve the 'greater depth' standard of learning.

Your leaders have developed their checks on the quality of teaching and learning over time, in order to be clear about where standards need to improve. Middle leaders are increasingly involved in visiting lessons to check the quality of teaching. Leaders use a range of evidence to check the difference that teaching is making to pupils' learning over time. Consequently, your leadership team has a clear and accurate understanding of which specific aspects of teaching need to develop across the school. This has helped you to recognise that teaching is not currently as consistently strong across the whole of key stage 1, and to put useful support in place to help this to improve.

The governing body has changed notably in its composition since the last inspection. A timely review of governance has been useful in helping governors, under the direction of a new chair, to identify how to strengthen their work. The governing body now has systems in place that enables it to recruit new governors who have complementary skills. Governors are beginning to develop the rigour with which the governing body checks what leaders tell them about standards in the school. Governors recognise that there is further work to do in this regard, so that they can routinely and effectively challenge leaders about their work and how it is helping standards to rise.

External support

You have acted promptly and effectively to make best use of support from beyond the federation. You commissioned reviews of pupil premium funding and governance quickly after the last inspection, and have acted on the findings. This has helped to refine the school's work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The difference this action has made is evident from published and in-school information about pupils' performance, as well as from the quality of pupils' work in school. The local authority provides useful support, notably for middle leaders and governors,

which is strengthening the rigour with which they check on the impact of work to improve the school. Staff value the opportunities to work with colleagues from other local schools and with the Pioneer Teaching Alliance, which help ensure that their judgements about the quality of pupils' work are accurate.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Moles
Her Majesty's Inspector