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Miss Nicola Green  
Headteacher  
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Dear Miss Green

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Datchet St Mary's CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 25 April 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, governors and the trust 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:

- refine improvement plans by:
  - ensuring that leaders include a greater focus on the steps they are taking to continue to strengthen the quality of teaching
  - setting out more clearly how leaders and governors will measure the success of their plans, and the impact on raising standards
- review the current responsibilities of senior leaders so that these are distributed more evenly and enable them to play a fuller role in strengthening the quality of teaching
- ensure that teachers have consistently high expectations of the quality of pupils' writing.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, governors, the link adviser from the diocese and the education director from the multi-academy trust (MAT). I spoke informally with parents at the start of the school day. I reviewed the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation and a range of other documents, including the record of recruitment checks and safeguarding information. Together, we visited classes in early years and key stages 1 and 2. During these visits, I spoke with pupils and sampled some of their work.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the school has joined the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust. There have been many staff changes and significant change to the leadership of the school. In 2016, a temporary executive headteacher was appointed to the school following the resignation of the previous headteacher. You were initially appointed to the position of head of school, from your substantive post as deputy headteacher. In January 2017, you were appointed to the permanent position of headteacher.

## **Main findings**

Since your appointment as headteacher, you have taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching and to raise standards of attainment. You have not shied away from making difficult decisions and have successfully tackled underperformance. There is a strong sense of teamwork in the school, and staff and governors share your vision and determination for the school to continue to improve. You have managed the recent unexpected staff changes very well, and parents and carers appreciate your timely and regular communication with them about these changes.

Governors visit the school regularly, are well informed about all aspects of the school's work and provide appropriate challenge to leaders. Governors have ensured that the school's website now includes the required information for parents. There is a clear direction of travel and improvements are gathering momentum. However, improvement plans do not set out clearly enough how you are continuing to strengthen teaching, or how leaders and governors will evaluate the impact of their plans.

You have wisely reviewed job descriptions for all staff and have provided clear guidance and support to help teachers develop their roles as subject leaders. Subject leaders now contribute to, and feel part of, the drive for improvement. They have written suitable action plans and keep their subjects under the spotlight through their regular monitoring. Leaders value the MAT's good support and training and the opportunity to learn from other successful schools across the MAT. Nevertheless, we agreed that, currently, responsibilities within the senior leadership team are not

distributed evenly enough and that you are 'carrying' too many. As a result, some senior leaders do not yet play a full enough role in improving teaching and learning.

Since the previous inspection, you have introduced many positive changes, including some 'non-negotiables' to bring about greater consistency in the quality of teaching. You have made sensible changes to the school's approach to mathematics. Teachers now set tasks in mathematics that ensure the most able pupils are routinely challenged to solve harder problems. During our visits to classrooms, we could see pupils in key stage 2 being challenged to try more complex problems that required them to reason carefully. Pupils tackled these tasks with enthusiasm, talking animatedly about how they worked out the missing numbers in their calculations. Teachers are now more adept at noticing and responding to pupils' learning during lessons and, where needed, addressing errors and misconceptions. The school's improved assessment system means that teachers and leaders have a better understanding of pupils' progress.

You have refined and strengthened the school's approach to the teaching of writing. Teachers now provide more guidance for pupils so that they know how to be successful in their written work. During our visits to classrooms, some older pupils explained clearly how they value this guidance. When we sampled pupils' books, we could see that pupils also regularly review, reflect on and refine their writing. We also saw how well teaching assistants were supporting and guiding pupils, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, while writing is improving, we agreed that there is too much variability in the quality of pupils' work in books. This is because some teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough.

The many positive changes that you and other leaders have made have led to improvements in pupils' attainment. Children in the early years continue to achieve well, and in 2017 a higher than average proportion attained the expected good level of development. Better teaching has led to a marked improvement in the proportion of pupils who attain the required standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check. In 2017, almost all pupils achieved the expected standard.

You responded swiftly to the very low standards in the 2016 key stage 1 assessments. As a result of your effective action, standards rose significantly in 2017, particularly in writing. Nevertheless, despite this significant rise, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standards in writing and mathematics remained below the national average. You have rightly given even greater attention to improving outcomes in key stage 1. Attainment in key stage 2 has also risen and was close to the national average in 2017. Across the school, current pupils are making good progress and more pupils are now working at the expected standard. In addition, a higher proportion of the most able pupils are working at the higher standard.

You have raised the profile of attendance and introduced a raft of strategies to ensure that more pupils attend school regularly. Your hard work and determination

are bearing positive fruit. As a result of your concerted action, including your effective partnership work with outside agencies and parents and carers, attendance is improving. During this school year, the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school has halved. Overall attendance has risen and is now close to the national average. You have also strengthened safeguarding paperwork. The school's safeguarding policy is up to date and the monitoring and intervention records are of good quality.

### **External support**

The MAT has provided a high level of support, encouragement and challenge to leaders. The school improvement adviser from the MAT visits the school regularly and has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and where further improvements are needed. The information provided by the improvement adviser enables governors to have an accurate external view to support leaders' evaluations. In addition, the diocesan link adviser has continued to provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the director of education for the Diocese of Oxford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Windsor and Maidenhead. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Cox  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**