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15 June 2018

Mrs Joanne Jarrad
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Dear Mrs Jarrad

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Nursling Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 June 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:

- make full use of assessment information to ensure that pupils' progress is accelerating fast enough and to monitor the performance of different groups
- strengthen capacity by developing middle leaders.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan, reviewed other documents, took account of information about current pupils' attainment, including

sampling their work, and checked the school's single central record. You joined me as we made brief visits to all classes to look at teaching and learning. I spoke to pupils in lessons and met members of the school council. I talked to some parents at the beginning of the school day, and took account of the school's recent survey of parents' views and the responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire.

Context

There have been significant leadership and staffing changes since the last inspection. You took up post in September 2017. The chair and vice-chair of the governing body were new to their roles at the start of this school year. Three governors were appointed around the time of the last inspection; four have been appointed since. Almost half of the current classteachers have joined the school this academic year. Some classes have had more than one change of teacher this year.

Main findings

You made sure that a detailed improvement plan was in place early in the autumn term. This plan has kept leaders focused on improving teaching and learning and raising standards, particularly in mathematics, even when circumstances have conspired to knock things off track.

The new senior leadership team introduced a coaching programme last September, working side by side with individual teachers to improve teaching and learning. Unfortunately, the initiative stalled towards the end of the autumn term when the senior leader responsible for key stage 2 and mathematics left, also leaving Year 6 without a class teacher. It is testament to the determination of you and your deputy to improve pupils' education and not let things slip, that you came up with an alternative approach from January.

With the deputy moving to teach Year 6 for the majority of the week, the school has been well placed to tackle gaps in those pupils' learning. At the same time, the two of you have embarked on a weekly programme of monitoring teaching and learning through visits to classrooms and your senior leadership meetings, where you scrutinise teachers' planning and look at pupils' work. You provide feedback to teachers and follow up to check they have acted on it, and have made sure they received appropriate training, either from yourself or local authority advisers. Alongside this, you have introduced a new assessment system to track pupils' attainment against the expectations of the national curriculum. Teachers have had opportunities to moderate their judgements of pupils' work as a whole staff and with other local schools. In pupil review meetings you discuss with class teachers what they need to do for those pupils who are not doing as well as they should.

The impact of the work to improve teaching, learning and assessment could be seen in our visits to classes. The work set for pupils was generally pitched appropriately for their age. Teachers were consistently using the school's 'cutaway' approach to

provide extra support or more challenge for different groups. The positive impact of work to develop pupils' reasoning in mathematics was evident as pupils of all ages were expected to explain their thinking. Better teaching, combined with a new behaviour policy, has successfully tackled the issues with pupils' attitudes to learning that were reported on at the last two inspections. In the lessons visited, pupils knew what they had to do, settled quickly to their work and, with few exceptions, concentrated well. Those I spoke to endorsed this improvement in behaviour, telling me about the subjects they enjoy, how they feel they work harder now and that pupils behave well most of the time.

The samples of pupils' work we looked at showed that you and your deputy have a clear understanding of what pupils should know, understand and be able to do at different ages. Given the close checks you keep on how well pupils are doing, it is reasonable to conclude that the school's information about pupils' attainment is more accurate than in the past. This shows that from Year 1 upwards, pupils' attainment is lagging behind the improvements in teaching and that, across the school, standards are not yet where they should be. It does show, however, some improvements in the proportions of pupils exceeding expectations for their age.

There is more to be done to embed and fully utilise the new assessment system so that it gives you and governors all the information you need. For example, as well as focusing on attainment, leaders need to be clear whether pupils' progress is accelerating fast enough to be confident that teaching is consistently good over time. You have started to look at the performance of different groups and have concluded that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not doing as well as they could and that boys are underachieving. The next step is to analyse the information in more detail, alongside other information from your monitoring, to identify what the gaps in their learning are and plan how to tackle them.

Governors were swift to request the review of governance that inspectors recommended in May 2017 and to put in place an action plan to improve the way they worked from the beginning of this school year. They have taken advantage of the need to recruit new governors to make sure that between them they bring a good skill set from their experience in and beyond education. Governors draw on these skills to distribute responsibilities sensibly and more equitably. This, combined with training, more thorough monitoring and the detail you provide in reports means that the governing body knows the school much better and asks the right kind of questions to hold you to account.

Greater precision in the improvement plan would help governors to hold leaders to account even more closely. For example, they would have a better idea of the effectiveness of some actions if the intended impact was more specific from the start. In particular, they need to keep a focus on pupils' outcomes in all year groups, not just Years 2 and 6, so that they know improvements are sustainable over time.

Governors would also benefit from greater clarity about when actions should be completed and what they will cost. That way they can make sure plans stay on track, are affordable and provide value for money.

Developing the role of subject leaders was highlighted as an area for improvement at the last two full inspections. You have made some headway this year by involving teachers in looking at planning and pupils' work in their subjects, but this is still at an early stage. The departure of the key stage 2 and mathematics leader and other staff changes have depleted leadership capacity this year. All the work to lead improvements falls to you and your deputy in your senior roles and as mathematics and English leaders respectively. You have made two internal appointments for September, to the roles of mathematics leader and key stage 1 leader. You are in the process of securing a replacement for your special educational needs coordinator. Developing these staff in their new roles to increase leadership capacity so as to further improve pupils' outcomes is a key priority for the coming year.

External support

The local authority has provided good support and challenge for the school over the last two years, in particular through new headteacher induction and the support and challenge for schools that are not good. A recent one-day review has given a detailed steer on what still needs to improve. Training on, for example, aspects of mathematics and developing pupils' reading skills has helped to improve teaching. The review of governance gave the governing body clear pointers for improvement which it has acted on.

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

Yours sincerely

Alison Bradley
Her Majesty's Inspector