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Mrs Jacqueline Dalrymple
Headteacher
Hugh Joicey Church of England First School, Ford
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Dear Mrs Dalrymple

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hugh Joicey Church of England First School, Ford

Following my visit to your school on 9 June 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 November 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:

- complete the review of governance with increased urgency, tackling subsequent recommendations promptly
- address issues of handwriting, presentation and the quality of pupils' written work with renewed persistence
- support and challenge additional adults in their work to promote pupils' learning more consistently.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, subject leaders, the chair of the governing body and representatives from the diocese and the local authority to

discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. I examined school improvement planning and the systems for checking pupils' progress. I conducted lesson observations in all year groups, jointly with you. I spoke with a group of pupils and scrutinised the work in pupils' books. I also looked closely at a range of documents, including pupils' behaviour logs, minutes of governing body meetings, assessment information about pupils' progress and monitoring records of the quality of teaching and learning.

Context

Since the previous inspection, you have been appointed as the headteacher. You took up post in November 2016. Some restructuring of staff has taken place. Governors have set up a steering group to monitor the school's performance against the previous inspection's recommendations more closely. Senior and middle leaders now have allocated time to manage their roles and responsibilities.

Main findings

You responded quickly to the areas identified for improvement in the previous inspection report. Your school improvement and action plans are tied closely to the recommendations, prioritising them appropriately. A pupil-premium review took place promptly and you have paid close heed to the necessary actions it advised. Your evaluations of the school's current effectiveness and target-setting demonstrate clear intent to raise adults' expectations of what pupils can do and achieve. You are fully committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning and have taken decisive action to improve the effectiveness of leadership and management.

You swiftly set about embedding systems and procedures to track the attainment and progress of pupils. Staff use assessment information with improved confidence to plan for pupils and to target additional support or challenge where needs are identified. Outcomes for all key groups, including boys, girls, disadvantaged pupils, year groups and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are now documented and analysed each half term. Assessment information shows visible improvement for pupils across subjects this year in comparison with pupils' outcomes for 2016. More succinct, easier to understand assessment information is shared with governors each term.

The leadership and management of core subjects are improving. The leaders of mathematics and English now have dedicated time to manage their subject responsibilities. Both work with subject leaders from other schools, attending local training meetings and events. The mathematics leader embarked on a national professional qualification for middle leadership which is due for completion in July. Such professional development opportunities are improving leaders' skills and confidence. Subject leaders are beginning to lead training and observe teaching and learning in their subjects to ascertain precisely where strengths and weaknesses lie.

Actions to improve the quality and consistency of additional adults' work, however, are not yet effective. There is less formal support and challenge for this group of adults. Leaders are not evaluating the impact of additional adults' input carefully to ensure that pupils' learning is benefiting.

You have implemented a school-wide system for recording instances of poor behaviour. Detailed logs and records are now maintained with better consistency by all adults. You regularly evaluate this information to identify any patterns or trends, keeping governors informed of your findings and actions.

You have looked closely at the curriculum offered to pupils and have begun to consider its appeal for boys consciously. Trips and topics have been planned with boys' interests in mind and writing tasks have been aligned to meet their needs more effectively. This is beginning to inspire and engage boys more purposefully in their learning. You are aware, however, that the quality of pupils' writing in terms of content, handwriting and presentation, across the school, needs a sharper focus. Adults' expectations are not yet consistent and not all adults explain techniques or model writing well. This means pupils' abilities to write with flair and greater depths of skill are hampered.

Governors have been supportive of you and staff. They have undertaken some essential actions. A steering group has been set up; a skills audit was implemented and records show that governors are beginning to ask more challenging questions of leaders and managers. The chair of governors and a small core of others meet regularly with you; these governors have a detailed knowledge of the day-to-day running of the school. At times, however, meetings are informal and are not clearly documented or specific to school-improvement priorities. Some governors have an improving understanding of national and school information about pupils' progress and outcomes. Not all, however, have the necessary knowledge and skills to interrogate the information presented by school leaders in depth. Few governors have embarked on training that would heighten their skills appreciably. Implementation of the review of governance has been too slow. Owing to conflicts of interest that became apparent during the process of review, the arrangements for the review of governance suffered a setback. This has had a negative impact on the pace of improvement in this area. Governance continues to remain a key area of focus for improvement.

External support

The local authority has provided support and challenge for you and for subject leaders. The school improvement partner visits regularly, conducting joint observations of teaching and learning and scrutinising pupils' work for progress. A national leader of education was brokered to undertake a review of the school's use of the pupil-premium funding, resulting in a set of clear actions to support improved effectiveness in this area.

The diocese, too, has been supportive and challenging. Financial contributions have helped the school to make improvements to the building and to secure additional resources for pupils. A school effectiveness partner has visited, supporting and mentoring you.

External partners have been less effective in securing a rapid review of governance.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Manuel
Her Majesty's Inspector