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Mrs Fiona Rose
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Rose

Short inspection of Wootton St Peter's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in March 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Leaders' actions to tackle the areas for improvement from the previous inspection and to improve the quality of teaching across the school have not been fully successful. Since taking up the post of substantive headteacher in January 2016, you have made deep-rooted changes to the structure and organisation of the school. These changes include strengthening the system for tracking pupils' progress. They led to better results in 2017 key stage 1 national assessments. However, you rightly identify that teaching in key stage 2 is not consistently strong, and some current practice in key stage 1 needs further development. Across both key stages, most-able pupils and pupils with potential are not set work which is challenging enough. In addition, sometimes teachers' explanations to the whole class are not clear or accurate, indicating that some teachers' subject knowledge is not sufficiently secure.

Subject leaders sensibly acknowledge that there is more that needs to be done to ensure consistently strong teaching, especially in mathematics and writing. You have provided subject leaders with one-to-one guidance and made sure that they access training from the local network of schools, to which you belong. They have also received helpful support from the diocesan link adviser. As a consequence, subject leaders have made some initial improvements. However, these changes do

not go far enough. Subject leaders have yet to develop systematic and effective methods for improving teaching in the subjects they lead. In particular, they are not yet proficient in planning and evaluating school-wide initiatives and enriching teachers' subject knowledge.

Walking around the school, I was struck by how positively pupils respond when the topics teachers choose provide opportunities for thinking deeply. For example, when exploring the context for protest songs, pupils were asking profound questions, such as, 'Why do we have different religions in different countries?' However, in some classes, pupils who have inquisitive minds and an immense appetite for new learning are not being stimulated enough. Sometimes, as a result, their attention wanders and they engage in off-task chatter, which raises noise levels.

The pupils with whom I spoke praised many aspects of their school, recognising that they are well cared for. However, they also spoke very articulately about their desire to be challenged more in mathematics and have access to a wider selection of books to read, especially 'the classics'. The majority of parents and carers also made positive comments about the school on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, acknowledging improvements in early years and better support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. One parent commented, 'The school is great at giving extra support and help where needed; my children have really benefited from extra help.' However, some parents also raised a number of concerns about teaching, such as the lack of challenge in some classes in key stage 2. Governors are also aware that further improvements need to be made. The governing body has emerged from a period of turbulence and is now a leaner and sharper team. Members of the governing body have accessed relevant local authority training and are increasingly confident about how best to hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and effective. Although this is a small school, you have ensured that there is always a designated safeguarding lead available for pupils. You have collaborated well with local partner schools to make sure that staff who miss essential annual safeguarding training can access it in another school. You have also made changes so that pupils who find it hard to manage their emotions and who feel anxious are better supported. In particular, you have organised specialist training in emotional literacy for an assistant so she can provide pupils with bespoke support and guidance. The feedback gathered from the pupils receiving this support suggests that it is working well.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we reviewed the impact that leaders at all levels, including governors, are having on improving pupils' progress and attainment. You have improved some key organisational structures and, in so doing, have moved the school forward. For example, phonics is now delivered more effectively and low-attaining able pupils in Year 1 now access the national curriculum, whereas

previously they did not. As a result, over the past two years, key stage 1 results have improved. In 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check was above average. However, you recognise that aspects of the school need further development.

- Governance has improved and a number of new governors are now in post, including a new chair of governors. Governors visit the school to see it at work and are more aware of its strengths and weaknesses than in the past. The governing body acknowledges that it needs to sharpen up its oversight of the way in which teachers' performance is managed.
- Subject leaders do not currently have the capacity to identify and rectify deficits in teachers' subject expertise. The support that subject leaders have accessed has enabled them to take the lead on improving some aspects of teachers' practice. However, these new approaches are limited in their scope. For example, the numeracy lead has provided guidance to teachers on how to use specialist equipment in mathematics.
- One key line of enquiry was about levels of challenge, in particular the extent to which pupils who were working above the expected level at the end of key stage 1 are being stretched now that they are in key stage 2. You have rightly prioritised this in your improvement plans, and some headway has been made. However, leaders at all levels have not stringently checked whether new approaches are consistently challenging enough. For example, in numeracy, pupils do not experience opportunities to apply their knowledge at a deeper level on a regular basis.
- We also reviewed writing, as this was a key area from your previous inspection report and, for the last two years, key stage 2 results have been well below average. You have wisely ensured that pupils have opportunities to write in a broader range of styles. However, some of the writing tasks that pupils are set are too limiting and do not provide pupils with the chance to use adventurous vocabulary and sentence structures. Leaders' checks have not always picked up on this.
- You have improved the system used to track pupils' progress so it enables you to make comparisons between groups of pupils and identify pupils who are falling behind. However, you and your subject leaders do not make enough use of this information when judging the quality of teaching. Information from the upgraded tracking system shows that too few pupils are currently on track to meet their appropriately challenging targets, especially in lower key stage 2.
- Pupils I spoke with said that they feel safe around the school. They acknowledge that you have generally improved behaviour since you became headteacher. A number mentioned that the behaviour and conduct of a minority of pupils in their class sometimes disrupts their learning. They all expressed a desire to succeed and a genuine love of learning. Some also expressed frustration that they did not get the stimulation they crave, especially access to great works of literature.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- their evaluations of the quality of teaching are more stringent and take greater account of the progress that pupils are making
- they develop the skills and expertise of subject leaders so they make a bigger contribution to improving teaching, particularly by enhancing teachers' subject expertise
- teachers set tasks in mathematics and writing which enable pupils, especially the most able and those with potential, to apply their skills at a greater depth
- pupils have access to a wider range of books to read for pleasure, including great works of literature.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I checked safeguarding arrangements, including the records of recruitment checks, policies and procedures. I reviewed a range of information, which included the school's own evaluation and improvement plans, external audits and information about pupils' progress. I observed pupils learning in mathematics, reading and writing across all year groups, accompanied by you. I also met separately with subject leaders and the designated safeguarding lead. The diocesan improvement adviser and the local headteacher, who has been supporting the school on the behalf of the local authority, met with me together. I also held a meeting with the chair of the governing body, accompanied by two other governors. I undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work and met with a small group of pupils. After school, I spoke informally with parents as they collected their children. I also scrutinised results from the 35 parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, and the 21 free text comments parents made, as well as 17 responses to the staff survey.