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Mr Neil Garratt
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Garratt

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Elworth CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 July 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 June 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in June 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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 develop the role of middle leaders so that the strengths in English and mathematics are replicated across the curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, teachers, the chair and a member of the governing body and a representative of the diocese to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's self-evaluation and improvement plan were evaluated. The inspector

also visited classrooms with the headteacher, checked pupils' work in books, heard pupils read and talked to pupils. The inspector considered the school's most recent pupil performance data.

Context

The school's senior leadership team was restructured earlier in this academic year. A new deputy headteacher took up post in April 2017 to work alongside the assistant headteacher and headteacher.

Main findings

Your relentless focus on teaching, learning and assessment has paid dividends. Across the school, pupils are making stronger progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Your investment in high-quality training and support has ensured that teachers have the skills and expertise to plan and deliver effective lessons. Your teachers are clear about what their pupils need to know, understand and be able to do by the end of the year. During lessons and when marking pupils' work, they assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers use this information to help them plan lessons which move pupils' learning on quickly. Quite rightly, you are heartened by the end of year results which show improvements across the board.

Your new assessment and tracking system ensures that you can check on the progress of individuals, classes, cohorts and groups at the click of a button. You make sure that the information your teachers provide is reliable. For example, pupils' writing is subject to both internal and external moderation. You use this assessment information to challenge your teachers about their pupils' progress, making sure that any pupil falling behind is given the additional help they need.

You have used a wealth of evidence, including assessment information, to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses accurately. You have made good use of this information to draw up an aspirational improvement plan. Leaders, staff and governors are in no doubt about what the school's priorities are. Moreover, you have set out clearly who is responsible for each action, carrying out frequent progress checks so that deadlines are met. You have made sure the plan focuses on the areas of most pressing need. For example, together with your English lead teacher, you have made sure that standards in writing have risen rapidly across the school. Classrooms are filled with hints and tips to help pupils get inspiration, check their spelling and improve their vocabulary choices during writing lessons. Your pupils love reading and their immersion in high-quality texts shines through in their writing.

Governors admit that they did not get the leadership structure right to start with. However, governors recognised the challenges you faced, and gave you high levels of support. Governors have made the necessary structural changes now and new appointments are helping you accelerate your plans. Together, the governors and

new leadership team have a clear vision of where you want to take the school next and how you intend to do it. Governors acknowledge that their role needs to change in response to the strengthened leadership team. Governors have started to increase the level of challenge. For example, link governors are making regular visits to meet with senior and middle leaders to check on the progress of agreed actions.

Through your meticulous monitoring, evaluating and reporting system you keep a close eye on the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You check that your teachers plan lessons which help these pupils to make strong progress from their different starting points. You have almost eliminated the legacy of underperformance for this group across the school. The overwhelming majority of these pupils are making expected progress and many are making more than expected progress.

The assistant headteacher with responsibility for pupil premium checks the progress of those pupils who are eligible meticulously. She makes sure that they receive the support they need to overcome any barriers to learning. The link governor with responsibility for pupil premium carries out frequent checks to make sure the funding is used well. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils across the school are catching up quickly with their peers nationally. You do not intend to rest on your laurels. We talked about how you can have even more impact through distributing responsibility for this group to all your link governors and subject leaders. This will help to ensure that disadvantaged pupils perform well across the curriculum.

Governors, leaders and staff are all raising their expectations for pupils. We talked about how you can still do more to raise the bar for your most-able pupils, including your most-able disadvantaged pupils. You have already got ideas about how you can develop these pupils' different abilities and talents further.

Since the school was judged to require improvement, you have focused on raising standards in English and mathematics. You have achieved considerable success in raising pupils' literacy and numeracy achievement across the school. Now that this success is built on firm foundations, it is time to bring the other subjects in line. You are confident that your English and mathematics lead teachers have the capacity to support their colleagues to replicate this success across the curriculum.

External support

You have valued the advice and guidance you have received from both the diocese and your school improvement partner. The diocese have provided a wealth of support since the previous inspection. For example, earlier this week, they undertook a comprehensive two-day review of the school. Through the diocese, you have forged a number of informal and formal partnerships with local schools. The governing body commissioned a review of the use of pupil premium. This confirmed

the improvements the school had already made to its provision for disadvantaged pupils and identified possible next steps.

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

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland

Her Majesty's Inspector