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Mrs Sarah Patterson
Headteacher
St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided School
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Dear Mrs Patterson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided School, Preston, Weymouth

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 September 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in September 2015, 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:

- ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so that rates of improvement are accelerated in all classes
- secure further improvement in the early years
- sustain the effective action to improve attendance and further reduce persistent absence.

Evidence

During the inspection, I evaluated the school improvement plan. I scrutinised progress information and visit notes from the local authority. I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I also met with the leaders of English and mathematics and a representative from the local authority. I held a meeting with five governors, including the chair of the governing body. Together with your deputy headteacher and newly appointed assistant headteacher, we visited all classes and looked at pupils' books. I also spoke with pupils about their work and their views of the school. I analysed the outcomes of the 49 responses from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Context

There have been considerable changes in leadership since the previous inspection. A new chair of the governing body took up position in July 2016. The headteacher resigned from post in August 2016. An interim headteacher took up post for two terms before you joined as substantive headteacher in April 2017. A new deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2016. Four teachers have left the school. Changes in staffing and the temporary nature of some teaching roles has been a cause for anxiety among some parents. However, responses to Parent View suggest that parents are much happier with the school's work this year. The school will join with the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust from 1 July 2017.

Main findings

Staff and governors are wholly committed and driven to improve pupils' outcomes. Your whole-school action plan tackles the issues identified at the last inspection. Leaders have identified clear actions to bring about sustainable school improvement. The timely milestones reflect your aspirations. Governors use the milestones as a useful tool by which they hold senior leaders to account.

There has been a huge gain in the momentum of improvement this academic year. Governors and the local authority agree that improvement was slow to start after the inspection in 2015. For example, the pupil premium review had little impact. This was because the actions suggested were not sufficiently specific or robust. Consequently, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have been slow to improve. However, the rate of disadvantaged pupils' progress has been rapid since the change in governance in July 2016.

Class teachers know which pupils in their class are in receipt of additional government funding and are now accountable for their progress. Teachers now better match work to suit pupils' needs. Disadvantaged pupils are making accelerated progress. Consequently, the differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils across the school and others nationally are diminishing. Teachers' insistence on accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling has led to

improvements. Similarly, teachers are providing better challenge for the most able pupils. However, you recognise that this work is in its infancy.

Revised governance structures and effective training have equipped governors well to hold senior leaders to account. The chair of the governing body provides strong leadership. Governors recognise their previous weaknesses and now fervently hold senior leaders to account. Governors' frequent visits to the school support their well-informed views. Consequently, governors are confident in their evaluation of the improvements being made. The governing body have invested considerable time in exploring academy options to secure the school's future. However, they have not let this work distract them from making frequent checks on school improvement. There has been rapid improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stages 1 and 2 this academic year. This has led to much-improved outcomes for pupils. In addition, governors have challenged leaders to ensure that pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare has also improved. Pupils are safe. Attendance is improving, although it is still below the national average. Documentation reflects that leaders act swiftly and determinedly where they have concerns.

Senior leaders have skilfully supported teachers to use what pupils know and can do to plan learning that supports rapid progress. Staff morale is good. Effective staff training and work with other schools has strengthened teachers' subject knowledge. Teachers' thorough understanding of the standards and content of the national curriculum is being used to raise standards. For example, teachers are developing pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics effectively. On our learning walk we observed pupils demonstrating great resilience in solving mathematical problems.

You have established high expectations and provide teachers with clear guidance and support. As a result, pupils are making accelerated progress in all year groups apart from in the early years. However, the rate of improvement is not yet consistently high across the school. Where teachers are less confident in planning and assessing pupils, progress is not as striking. When teachers fall short of your high expectations, you and your deputy headteacher are providing high levels of support. This support has been effective in raising the pace of improvement but you are not complacent. You recognise that there is still work to do to ensure that a greater consistency exists within year groups.

Pupils' achievement has improved significantly in key stages 1 and 2. Senior leaders' work has helped teachers to gain a better understanding of the different groups of pupils they teach. Regular 'progress meetings' between senior leaders, class teachers and governors ensure that the progress and attainment of all pupils is carefully checked. Where necessary, additional help is immediately put into effect to support pupils to catch up quickly. In some cases, the deputy headteacher makes daily checks to ensure that pupils' needs are met. This work is supporting increased rates of progress for all pupil groups. Pupils told me, 'Our teachers help us to improve.' Pupils were proud to share the progress in their books.

You recognise that improvements in the early years are less embedded. A series of temporary staff has slowed down the pace of change for the better in this area. Children's writing and number skills are still not good. However, you and the governing body are determined to tackle this and continue to engage the support of specialist leaders in education to support improvement in the early years. Governors are committed to heavy investment in the early years. You have secured a permanent and experienced leader of the early years for September 2017.

External support

Leaders have been proactive in seeking advice from the local authority and the Wimborne Teaching School Alliance. Your staff have benefited from the support of specialist leaders in education in assessment, English and mathematics. Effective systems are becoming embedded. In particular, the school's assessment systems are robust and accurate. Staff are positive about the support they have received and are clear about their next steps. You have ensured that middle leaders are gaining the skills they need to support further improvement. Middle leaders are wholly positive about this support. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subject areas.

The diocese has provided effective support in sourcing a chair of governors and an interim headteacher at very short notice. Local authority officers were slow to provide effective support and challenge for leaders, particularly immediately after the inspection in 2015. However, senior leaders and governors make good use of the safeguarding and governance training provided by the local authority. This training has been effective. The pupil premium review, which took place after the previous inspection, was weak and did not clearly support the school to plan robust actions to deal with weaknesses in its support of disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector