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Mrs Sarah Lea
Headteacher
Jesson's CofE Primary School (VA)
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Dear Mrs Lea

Short inspection of Jesson's CofE Primary School (VA)

Following my visit to the school on 23 October 2018 with Jonathan Keay HMI, 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 May 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.**

At Jesson's Church of England Primary School you have established a strong, inclusive culture where all pupils and families are welcomed as part of the 'Jesson's family'. Many pupils join the school at different times of the school year, often with limited English language skills, but they are well supported. English language classes are also offered to parents. This is just one of the many ways the school reaches out to the community.

Pupils are happy at school. They are well-behaved, articulate and confident learners. They enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including educational visits, sporting events and accessing the school library with their parents.

Staff are proud to work at the school. You have created a positive and open culture. As a result, teachers and other staff respect you and feel well supported. They say that new initiatives are well considered.

The school has been through a period of some disruption in leadership in recent years. During your unavoidable absence in the previous academic year, standards declined. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and in mathematics by the end of key stage 2 dipped further below the 2017 national average. In 2018, the proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics also dipped to be significantly below the 2017 national average.

This was because leaders were slow to identify and address weaknesses in teaching and assessment. Disadvantaged pupils and boys did not achieve as well as their peers.

As a result of the declining outcomes in 2018, you have put in place robust plans to strengthen teaching, learning and assessment. For example, you wasted no time in putting in place strategies to address the identified weaknesses in key stage 1. You have restructured the leadership team and appointed a new phonics leader. This is beginning to have an impact. However, there is more work to be done to ensure that reading books match the sounds pupils are learning and that teachers use consistent language in their teaching.

Governors have recently undertaken a skills audit and reorganised their structure. They are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are beginning to hold leaders to account more rigorously through regular monitoring. The governing body has struggled to fill a number of vacancies.

Leaders have effectively addressed the areas for development from the previous inspection. The quality of writing across the school has improved. There is now a stronger link between reading and writing, and an increased focus on developing pupils' vocabulary. Pupils are encouraged to record and remember interesting words in their vocabulary books. However, this is not done in isolation. The curriculum supports pupils to learn and understand unfamiliar words in the context of a range of subjects. Teachers now expect the same high standards of writing across the curriculum. You have introduced a new systematic scheme for the teaching of handwriting. Inspectors saw evidence of improvements in pupils' handwriting across the school. Teachers have implemented these new approaches consistently. However, there is scope for teachers to adapt their plans for teaching reading and writing to meet the needs of more confident and fluent readers and writers.

You have also ensured that the proportion of pupils achieving at the higher standard has increased since the last inspection, for example in reading at key stage 2 and in reading and mathematics at key stage 1.

There are plans in place for further opportunities for staff to share good practice, as recommended at the last inspection. However, these are not yet fully embedded.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders escalate their concerns with the local authority when appropriate and follow up on referrals rigorously. Staff keep suitable records arranged chronologically and meet regularly to discuss vulnerable pupils.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular updates and training on changes to statutory guidance. Staff are aware of the signs of abuse and know to whom to report concerns. Staff and parents are confident that children are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- Attendance is now in line with the national average and the proportion of pupils who have above-average absence has reduced. Staff follow up any absences rigorously to check that pupils are safe when they are not in school. They take appropriate action to address any concerns, for example by involving external agencies. Leaders challenge any weak attendance. Pupils receive rewards for good attendance, which are celebrated and shared in assemblies.
- Fixed-term exclusions, which have been above the national average in the past, are now in line with the national average. The school works hard to support pupils who have any social or emotional needs, including working with families.
- Following the dip in 2018 phonics outcomes, you acted swiftly to identify the causes and put in place appropriate actions to ensure outcomes improve. You have deployed teachers to make the best use of their expertise and appointed a new early years leader. You have engaged support from an external consultant to help staff to improve their practice. As a result, the early years environment is a vibrant place with engaging learning activities. There is a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. Teachers structure phonics sessions well and check pupils' learning regularly to identify any gaps in their understanding. However, they do not always use the same words to describe letters and the sounds they make in their teaching. Teachers do not record consistently how often they listen to pupils read. The books that pupils read do not always match the sounds pupils are learning.
- There is now a structured approach to the teaching of reading across the school. In group reading sessions, older pupils read confidently and fluently. They discuss their reading in a mature way and demonstrate well-developed skills of comprehension and inference. Teachers and other adults provide effective support to pupils to develop their skills.
- In 2018, a very low proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, and progress declined. Leaders have not ensured that the spending of the pupil premium funding from previous years has been effectively evaluated. As a result, the plans for future spending are not based securely on evidence of what works well.
- Since your return, you have restructured the senior leadership team, tightened up monitoring procedures and strengthened performance management processes. Middle leaders are now more fully involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility. They support teachers to improve, and report to senior leaders and governors on the impact of their work. Together with the strengthened leadership team, you have identified appropriate actions to address the weaknesses apparent from the provisional information about outcomes in 2018. However, more time is needed for these actions to show evidence of impact.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the changes made in response to weaknesses in the provision of phonics are monitored for impact and result in improved outcomes
- teachers benefit from the planned opportunities to share expert practice in phonics teaching
- leaders monitor more closely how often staff listen to pupils read, and how well reading books are matched to the sounds pupils are learning
- teachers use the systematic approaches to the teaching of writing and reading flexibly to suit the needs of all pupils
- they evaluate the spending of pupil premium funding with greater rigour to ensure there is a clear rationale for future spending.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Spilsbury
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss the school's self-evaluation and school development plan. Together we discussed progress since the last inspection, changes to the leadership structure and current assessment information.

Inspectors visited lessons together with leaders in early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. We looked at pupils' books during our visits to lessons. An inspector listened to pupils read and reviewed their reading records.

Inspectors observed pupils in the breakfast and after-school clubs. We spoke to pupils about what they like about school and how to stay safe.

An inspector met with the designated leader about safeguarding. We also spoke to staff about their understanding of safeguarding. I checked the single central record of staff safeguarding checks.

I met with the chair and a member of the governing body and scrutinised a selection of governing body minutes. I met with a representative from Dudley local authority.

I took account of 27 responses to the staff survey, 69 responses to the pupil survey and 12 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. An inspector spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.