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Mrs Kerry Postans
Headteacher
Burlish Park Primary School
Windermere Way
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Worcestershire
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Dear Mrs Postans

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Burlish Park Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 September 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in July 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, pastoral leader and four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. In addition, Her Majesty's Inspector held a telephone discussion with a school improvement adviser from Babcock Education Service, which is commissioned by Worcestershire local authority to provide advice and support for the school. The inspector met with the chief executive officer of The Rivers Church of England Academy Trust (the trust). The trust will shortly be the appropriate authority for the school when it converts to become an academy. Meetings were also held with the teachers responsible for leading English and mathematics, and the inspector spoke with some parents and carers at the start of the school day. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement and action plans were evaluated.

The inspector visited lessons jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition to speaking to pupils during lessons and breaktimes, the inspector

scrutinised some of their work in books. The school's staff vetting, child protection and safeguarding procedures and policies were checked.

Context

The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2017. At the time of the previous inspection, they were the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, respectively. The school is due to become an academy on 1 October 2018 and the trust will become the appropriate authority. As part of the scheme of delegation agreed with the Department for Education, the trust's board of trustees will have in place a school improvement board (SIB), which is the equivalent of a governing body. The current members of the school's governing body will all become members of the SIB.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have achieved a great deal since the previous inspection. Together with the governing body and staff, they are building strong capacity for sustained improvement. Leaders and governors have ensured that there has been significant and marked improvement to the quality of teaching across the school. The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire and all the parents that spoke with the inspector agree, rightly, that the school is improving. Leaders are improving teaching and pupils are achieving better than previously. Parents are well informed about the school's improvement through regular and well-illustrated newsletters.

The previous inspection reported that disadvantaged pupils were underachieving. It also reported that some of the teaching in key stage 2 was poor and this slowed pupils' progress, particularly in writing. The headteacher's strong commitment and effective leadership to addressing these failings have turned things around. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher are effective and determined to continually improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. They regularly monitor teachers' performance, which has eliminated weak practice. Improvement plans reflect accurately on what leaders are seeing when monitoring lessons. The headteacher and deputy provide accurate and incisive feedback to staff that is continually improving teachers' performance and pupils' learning.

Early years provision and teaching in key stage 1 remain good. The results of national assessments since the previous inspection bear this out. The proportions of pupils reaching and exceeding age-related standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 compare well with national figures. At key stage 2, the 2017 and the provisional unvalidated 2018 national test results show significant improvement. However, there is still room for more improvement as too few pupils in Year 6 last year exceeded age-related standards in writing and mathematics. Pupils' achievement in reading is much better right across the school.

Pupils read regularly and widely. The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to access the well-resourced school library.

Staff use assessments much more diligently and accurately than previously to plan lessons and programmes of work for pupils to study. Assessment information is used better now to identify those pupils who need to catch up on previously lost ground. Leaders and staff have been successful in improving pupils' achievements in all classes in key stage 2. This includes disadvantaged pupils, most of whom are now reaching or exceeding age-related standards. The difference between their progress and that of other pupils in the school and nationally is reducing. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making more consistently good progress in key stage 2 than previously reported. Leaders have also built on what was previously good provision in the language unit for pupils who have speech and language needs.

Leaders and governors have identified the right priorities for improvement in their action plans. The plans set out the core tasks and actions that leaders and staff will undertake to raise standards and improve teaching. For example, the focus on improving pupils' independent writing is working well. The quality and accuracy of pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation are improving. Teachers in all classes teach and model writing effectively so there is greater consistency than previously in the form and structure of pupils' writing.

The focus in the mathematics action plan to help pupils learn in greater depth, especially the most able pupils, is starting to bear fruit. Pupils' work in books and the teaching observed show that pupils are tackling mathematics problems better than previously. There is still scope, however, to ensure that teachers provide the right level of challenge in lessons, particularly for the most able pupils. There are occasions when pupils do too many less-complex mathematical problems before moving on to the planned extension tasks. In addition, some of the intended extension work in mathematics lessons is not as challenging as it should be. Leaders are aware of this and are addressing it through closer scrutiny of pupils' work and the monitoring of lessons. Senior leaders provide accurate and effective feedback to staff and there are increasing opportunities for teachers and support staff to see and share good practice.

Leaders, staff and governors have maintained a positive climate for learning. Pupils are very well behaved, polite and courteous to each other and visitors. This is a very positive school community and pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in good attendance rates, including the much-improved attendance of disadvantaged pupils, which was also an area for improvement cited at the time of the previous inspection.

Staff value pupils' work and efforts. This is evident in the range of work in pupils' books and in displays of their work around the school. The work in topic books and special projects reflect a range of educational visits to local places of interest that

develop pupils' interest and curiosity about history, science and geography. Leaders have been successful in maintaining a curriculum that promotes British values of tolerance, respect and care for the local community and environment. The school has excellent indoor and outdoor resources, including its own 'forest school' woodland area. At the time of the inspection, parents and their children were thoroughly enjoying their 'taster day' in the woodland area. Leaders have also maintained strong provision in sport and the creative and performing arts.

The governing body has acted on the recommendations of an external review which took place in February 2018. Governors are now well placed to build on these recommendations as they embark on their new roles as members of the SIB when the school becomes an academy. Leaders and governors have also acted on the recommendations of an external review of the use of the pupil premium. The most recent national test results, although unvalidated for 2018, show that the funding has been used effectively to help disadvantaged pupils catch up on lost ground.

The local authority – through the commissioned support of the school improvement adviser (SIA) from Babcock Education Service – has been effective in its support for the school. The recommendations and reviews carried out by the SIA have helped leaders to sharpen school improvement planning and focus on the right priorities through training and continual professional development of teachers and support staff. It is also encouraging to note that the trust and the SIA are working closely to continue supporting the school. This has the potential for leaders and staff to continue utilising the expertise of both the trust and the local authority as it strives towards continuous school improvement. Senior and middle leaders are forming strong partnerships with other school leaders across the trust.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement and action plans are fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector