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Miss Georgina Maclennan
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Dear Miss Maclennan

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woolavington Village Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 29 January 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring 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 to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and trustees are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the head of school, assistant headteacher and a group of curriculum leaders. I also met with the multi-academy trust's chief executive officer, a trustee and the acting chair of the local governing board to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated.

I visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and heard some pupils read. In all of these, I was accompanied by the head of school or a curriculum leader.

Context

There have been considerable staffing changes since the previous inspection. Several new teachers and many teaching assistants have joined the staff. The number on roll has not changed significantly but many pupils leave and join the school during the academic year. Several governors have left the governing body. Currently, there is no chair and the vice-chair is covering this role. In September 2019, you reallocated subject coordinator roles to teachers.

Main findings

School leaders, staff, trust leaders, trustees and local governors are all committed to improving the quality of education at Woolavington. Since the previous inspection, you and your team have put the building blocks in place from which you can start to tackle the deficiencies in the quality of education. For example, the school is a calm and orderly environment. Pupils are polite and follow instructions.

You have identified the strengths and weaknesses in the school. Your action plan picks up the weaknesses and details many of the actions to bring about the improvements needed. Tangible improvements can already be seen, such as in the teaching of phonics, although you recognise that there is still more to do. However, the action plan is not precise enough in how success will be measured or who is responsible for specific actions. This makes it difficult for school and trust leaders to monitor effectively the progress that is being made or hold staff fully to account. You and the team are now sharpening your focus to ensure that each member of staff responsible is identified and measurable milestones are clear.

You have prioritised reading, phonics and mathematics. A clear structure is now in place for early reading. You are drawing on specialist support from the local English hub school and this is bringing about some improvements. A common approach to the teaching of phonics has been agreed and is being used in classes. Teachers are more aware of the ways they can teach early reading but there is more to do to ensure that teachers assess accurately and use this information to plan teaching that matches pupils' abilities closely.

In mathematics, you appointed a new leader in September 2019. She is embracing this opportunity wholeheartedly. She is working with the local mathematics hub school and benefiting from training in leadership. Leaders have reviewed the mathematics curriculum. It is appropriately sequenced and builds pupils' mathematical knowledge over time. The curriculum has been revamped to increase the opportunities pupils have to apply their mathematical knowledge and solve problems. Sometimes, however, this approach requires pupils to draw on a breadth and depth of knowledge they are not confident in.

Leaders are increasingly checking pupils' work, holding discussions with them about their learning and evaluating the impact of teaching. This is leading to a sharper

awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of education in mathematics. However, sometimes leaders' analyses lack precision and so the support given to teaching staff is not focused sufficiently on the subject knowledge and pedagogical understanding that they need.

At the previous inspection, inspectors noted significant weaknesses in the teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics. You evaluated the schemes in place at the time and have decided to take a new approach. You have appointed subject leaders based on their expertise or experience and most show a passion for their allocated subjects. In some subjects, such as physical education, plans are well thought through and are being developed further. In others, for example in geography, the subject leaders have not given sufficient thought to the cohesion of the plans. In recent months, the trust has established subject networks for a wider range of subjects. Some subject leaders have joined these. These allow colleagues from schools across the trust to share good practice. You recognise, however, that there is more to do to improve teachers' subject knowledge in many subjects.

Trustees, local governors and the chief executive officer are aware of the needs the school has and have taken some action to try to improve the quality of education, for example through making key appointments and allocating resources to the school to support the head of school. However, trust leaders have not yet ensured that the measures to improve the quality of education are closely enough matched to the needs of the teaching staff.

At the previous inspection, inspectors required the trust to commission a governance review. This has not yet been completed due to changes in the governors at local level but is scheduled for later in the year and will consider governance at local and trust level. In the meantime, local governance has been strengthened with the recruitment of new governors and the completion of training to improve their effectiveness.

External support

Trust leaders have arranged for support from a range of sources. These are well-matched to the priorities for improvement, such as the local English and mathematics hub schools. In December 2019, a national leader of education was appointed to work with the school. This augments the support that is given by the trust's head of primary school improvement.

The work of the specialist hub schools is beginning to have impact on improving the quality of education in English and mathematics. For example, as a result of the leadership training that the mathematics leader has received, there is a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in mathematics and the actions taken are tackling these weaknesses.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the trust board, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Iain Freeland
Her Majesty's Inspector