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Mrs Helen Donnelly
Amesbury Archer Primary School
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Dear Mrs Donnelly

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Amesbury Archer Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 March 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors 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, the inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Meetings were also held with some subject leaders, representatives of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. These meetings focused on the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated.

The inspector visited lessons with leaders and looked in pupils' workbooks. The inspector also talked to pupils about the experiences of school in class and at social times.

Context

There have been several changes to staffing since the last section 5 inspection. The deputy headteacher took up her role in January 2019. There have been changes to some teaching and support staff. Immediately after the last section 5 inspection, three governors resigned. Four new governors have been appointed. The chair of governors has changed since the last section 5 inspection.

Main findings

Leaders at all levels are working on the right aspects for improvement. As a result, the school-wide strategies leaders have put in place are making a notable difference. Leaders, including governors, have an acute understanding of the many emerging strengths, and the aspects that still require further work.

Leaders' determined actions are improving the quality of education which the pupils receive markedly. Teachers have higher aspirations of what pupils will know and understand. As a result, pupils achieve very well in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave in Year 6.

Leaders have overhauled the mathematics and writing curriculum. They have considered carefully what is taught and when. This means that pupils receive the building blocks of knowledge they need year on year. Staff use their good subject knowledge to ensure that pupils' learning needs are being met increasingly well. As a result, pupils are learning and remembering much more in writing and mathematics.

Leaders' work to improve staff subject knowledge in the teaching of phonics is paying off. There is a systematic approach to teaching early reading. As a result, most pupils are learning to read with success. However, leaders do not have enough oversight of the reading curriculum for pupils who struggle. These pupils are not catching up quickly enough yet.

Further up the school, teachers' subject knowledge of the teaching of reading is developing well. Consequently, most pupils read with good understanding. However, some sequences of work, in lower key stage 2, are not demanding enough yet. This hampers a minority of pupils in applying their reading knowledge consistently well.

Leaders' actions to improve other subjects such as geography, history, design technology and art are still at an early stage. Leaders have devised new plans to consider what will be taught and when for most subjects. However, the implementation of these plans is in its infancy. This means that pupils learn less in some subjects than others. Pupils do not gain the depth of knowledge they should in all national curriculum subjects.

Governors have sharpened up their work considerably. They have secured better systems and processes to ensure that they fulfil their statutory duties. Governors do not shy away from asking challenging questions. For example, they conduct activities to

assure themselves that the most vulnerable pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are receiving the right support.

Governors receive detailed information about how well disadvantaged pupils are doing. Their conversations focus on the impact of this additional funding on the quality of education that pupils receive. There are school-wide systems in place to ensure that when pupils struggle, including those who are disadvantaged, they receive targeted supported to catch up. This work is building momentum and so many pupils are learning more.

Leaders' work to ensure that the school's behaviour systems are applied consistently well is proving increasingly effective. Those pupils who did not go to lessons with their year group previously now attend lessons with their classmates and experience the full curriculum offer. Consequently, these pupils are seeing success and catching up.

Pupils are safe. Pupils behave well in lessons and in the school building. They enjoy the multitude of activities on offer at lunchtimes. Supervision in the dining hall is adequate. However, pupils' behaviour in the dining hall is not as good as it could be. Pupils are less well behaved at lunchtimes than in class. Leaders do not pick this up immediately.

External support

The school receives regular visits from the local authority. Leaders use this support to refine their actions for improvement. Leaders have also commissioned external training for staff in the teaching of writing and mathematics. This is proving effective in raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do and what they should know.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington
Her Majesty's Inspector