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Dear Mrs Robbins

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Park Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 12 May 2021, 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(2) 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- review the school's safeguarding policy so that it meets the requirements of the latest government guidance
- ensure that the school's approach for teaching reading is more effective, particularly for pupils who need to catch up.

Context

The previous headteacher left the school in April 2021. You were the school's deputy headteacher and took up the role of acting headteacher in November 2020. You set up an interim senior leadership team in February 2021, bringing together existing staff who were then allocated a variety of whole-school responsibilities, including for English and behaviour. The headteacher of a local school is providing leadership support.

During COVID-19, leaders worked closely with staff from the local infant school to provide joined-up support to families.

Main findings

You have spent your first few months carefully considering the school's priorities. These are communicated clearly in your revised school improvement plan. You have quickly set about pulling together a team of leaders to support your work. You and your colleagues are bringing a renewed vigour to improve the school.

You are prioritising curriculum development. Subject leaders have redesigned some aspects of the curriculum that needed improvement. Following the last additional monitoring inspection, you have reconsidered the order of learning in some subjects. Revised curriculum plans show what pupils are expected to know and by when. You are making sure that there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge securely in different subjects. Staff are beginning to adopt new ways of checking what pupils have remembered. For example, I found that pupils in Year 5 were able to recall key geographical locational knowledge, remembering previous learning about the countries of South America.

Leaders are beginning to make some important changes to prioritise the teaching of reading. Some staff have now received training and you have updated the school's reading resources. However, these strategies have yet to have the desired impact. For some pupils, who need to catch up, reading books do not match closely enough to the sounds that they are learning. Staff do not always have the expert knowledge required to help pupils. For example, when pupils hesitate with unknown sounds, staff do not always know how to move pupils' learning forward.

You have made some changes to the school's safeguarding procedures. You have become the school's designated safeguarding lead and are making sure that staff receive the right training. The school's safeguarding leaders now meet more regularly. This is helpful. However, the school's policy is outdated and does not reflect the effective practice of the school.

This has been an unsettling time for staff and parents. However, you are instilling confidence and your approach is starting to win the trust of the local community. Parents

are more positive about leaders' communication. They feel that the school is beginning to improve.

Governors have been a pillar of strength and are determined to see the school improve. Together with local authority representatives, they have worked purposefully to ensure that leadership arrangements are stable. Securing leadership of the school was rightly everyone's top priority.

Additional support

You are receiving valuable support from the headteacher of a local school. Staff have received training to support them in teaching phonics from the local English hub. However, this has not yet had sufficient impact to provide strong support for pupils who are at the earliest stages of reading fluently.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the acting headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, two members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's improvement plan and various school policies were evaluated.

I reviewed examples of curriculum planning and some examples of pupils' work. Together, you and I visited some lessons. I spoke with a small group of pupils and heard some Year 3 pupils read. I considered seven views represented in response to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including five free-text responses, and 23 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector