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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted

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Carys Barnett
Headteacher
Beaminster St Mary's Academy
Clay Lane
Beaminster
Dorset
DT8 3BY

Dear Mrs Barnett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Beaminster St Mary's Academy

Following my visit to your school on 5 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 the school 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:

- ensure that planning for subjects in the wider curriculum is carefully sequenced to enable pupils to build on what they know, remember and can do.

Context

Since the last inspection, you took up post as headteacher in January 2020. An early years leader and a special educational needs and disabilities coordinator joined the school this academic year.

Some aspects of the school's improvement in the curriculum have slowed due to COVID-19, particularly in the foundation subjects.

Main findings

You and the interim assistant headteacher have high expectations of both staff and pupils. Since the last inspection, you have worked with determination and taken swift action to make improvements. For example, you made bold decisions about key changes to the school's core curriculum and the early years phase. These are proving to be successful and have provided the foundations for continued improvement. Leaders of mathematics and early years report that you have created an open and supportive ethos. As a result, the community appreciates the changes that are taking place.

Leaders prioritise pupils' reading. The introduction of a new systematic synthetic phonics scheme enables pupils to gain phonic knowledge quickly that they then apply well in their written work. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are engaged in their learning and are keen to do well. Pupils are supported effectively by well-trained staff. As a result, pupils in the Reception Year achieve well. Those pupils who require further support get the help that they need quickly.

You are building a curriculum based on the knowledge and skills pupils need to be successful. In the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics, content is carefully selected so that pupils build upon what they already know and can do. For example, in mathematics, pupils talk confidently about how previous learning has helped them when they come across new content. However, this approach is not as effective in some subjects in the wider curriculum. Senior leaders have begun to address this by supporting subject leaders more closely.

Governors monitor the work of the school closely and provide effective support and challenge to leaders. Consequently, they are contributing well to the improvements being made.

Additional support

The multi-academy trust continues to provide useful support to the school. Staff benefit from working alongside other schools. Provision of training for staff and governors is matched to need, and there is regular coaching support for middle leaders. English and mathematics hubs and external consultants provide valuable

support. Staff benefit from this wide range of help to build upon the school's improvement work.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the interim assistant headteacher, other senior leaders, the director of education for the multi-academy trust, pupils, staff and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited phonics lessons, looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and reviewed school documentation including governors' minutes and monitoring documents from the trust and external partners. I looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 17 free-text responses, as well as 11 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Salisbury, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Dorset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Barraclough
Her Majesty's Inspector