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Karen Salter
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Dear Mrs Salter

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Cross Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 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 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. 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.

Context

The school has recently been through a difficult period. The executive headteacher was absent from January 2021. The school's new interim executive headteachers took up post in the spring term 2021, moving from their previous roles as the

school's improvement partners. Leaders continue to work closely with two other similar schools in the local area.

Leaders have revised the school's improvement plan to take account of COVID-19.

Main findings

Despite a difficult period, those responsible for the school have made sure that improvement has continued unabated. This forward momentum that was previously set in motion has withstood the most difficult of times. Leaders' aims are fully supported by a willing team who work collaboratively. All staff have leaders' key priorities at the forefront of their work.

The school's plans are fit for purpose and include a range of appropriate activities with suitable timescales. Leaders regularly evaluate the school's progress. Everyone, including governors, is forging ahead, beginning to implement a much richer curricular approach. All subjects are now well organised and underpinned by careful thought. The teaching of reading has an appropriately strong emphasis in the school's plans. Leaders ensure that relationships education features prominently in their curricular design.

You have outlined a clear pathway to improve subject leadership. Subject leaders can describe how pupils' knowledge of key themes is expected to develop over time. In their subject plans, they have thoughtfully woven through opportunities for pupils to revisit and practise key knowledge. Subject leaders have planned learning so that pupils' knowledge builds step by step over time. They have clear plans to develop their roles. Leaders' work to monitor the impact of the school's new curriculum is rightly set as the next priority to evolve. Nevertheless, training is helping leaders to support teachers more effectively. Staff are positive about the school's development. They report that this school is improving and that they are satisfied with the training opportunities that are in place.

Staff have thought carefully about what key knowledge pupils are required to know in the full range of subjects. Teachers are now clear about what to teach and when. They are developing their expertise securely. Staff make regular checks on what pupils have understood. They offer pupils encouragement and appropriate guidance, for example when making vocabulary choices in their writing. This means that pupils are supported soundly, and consequently are developing a more sophisticated grasp of language. Some teachers spotlight opportunities for pupils to revisit previously taught content when this is not secure.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive a broader curriculum than in the past. They benefit from more considered support. Teaching assistants are beginning to develop their skills, prompting and supporting pupils more effectively.

Pupils feel safe. They know that there is an adult who can help if, from time to time, problems arise. They say that staff deal with issues to everyone's satisfaction.

Additional support

In some areas, helpful training is strongly developing leaders' expertise. Support provided by the local English hub has made a very positive contribution to staff expertise in the teaching of early reading.

Several similar local schools are providing informal support to school leaders. Partnership working is well established and helpful.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, one of the interim executive headteachers, other senior leaders, pupils, staff and the chair of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons in some year groups, looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and reviewed school documentation, including governor minutes. I looked at 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and seven free-text responses, as well as 17 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr

Her Majesty's Inspector