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Donna Butler
Acting Head of School
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Dear Mrs Butler

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Andrew's CofE Primary 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 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:

- complete its English curriculum review to ensure that pupils develop stronger reading comprehension and writing.

Context

The previous inspection took place in February 2020. Since then, trust leaders, you and your staff have developed curriculum plans for many subjects. However, the pandemic has slowed the development of other curriculum subjects, including English.

Since the last inspection, you have been appointed as the acting head of school. You are also the special educational needs coordinator. Two co-chairs of the local governing body have joined the school, along with another new governor. New leaders of English and computing have been appointed.

Main findings

Trust leaders have ensured that leadership is stable and that leaders are equipped to fulfil their roles. This has allowed you to take effective action to address the weaknesses in the quality of education identified at the last inspection.

Your school improvement plan is suitably detailed and focused on the right priorities. It demonstrates that you are ambitious for the school and have set out achievable plans to provide a good standard of education. For example, from early years to Year 6, you have organised the mathematics, science, geography, and French curriculums effectively. However, you know that other curriculum plans need more time to be implemented effectively across the school.

You and your staff have developed a strong focus on reading since the previous inspection. You ensure that children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 have books that match their reading ability. This has helped most pupils to read fluently. You know that further work is needed to improve other aspects of the English curriculum, such as reading comprehension. Consequently, a review of the curriculum content and sequencing is underway. You aim to implement an improved English curriculum by September 2021.

You acknowledge that links between the reading and writing curriculums are not clear. The English leader has selected some class reading texts to support the development of pupils' writing skills. However, this work is recent, and it is too early to see an impact. Suitable plans are in place to support staff to strengthen the content and delivery of the writing curriculum. For example, you have planned training to help teachers improve pupils' use of grammar and vocabulary.

Your work with the trust inclusion leader is leading to rapid improvements to the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils now receive effective support so that they can access the curriculum successfully. For example, teaching assistants provide extra sessions to help pupils overcome barriers to their learning. This support is well established in many subjects, including English. Consequently, pupils' previous gaps in curriculum knowledge are reducing.

Governors have increased their knowledge and understanding of the quality of education provided by the school. They have regularly monitored school leaders' actions during the pandemic. The safeguarding governor has assured the local governing body that safeguarding is effective, through extensive checks including scrutinising staff training and recruitment information.

Additional support

You have made very effective use of support from the trust. You work closely with the trust's academy improvement partner. This collaboration has led to an acceleration in developments to leadership and management. For example, curriculum leaders have increased their subject expertise. This has resulted in well-organised curriculums for more subjects.

You and your staff have also benefited from external support and challenge from local subject networks that are helping you to improve the English curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the trust inclusion leader and chief executive officer, subject leaders, pupils, staff and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons with the English leader, looked at examples of pupils' work and examined other documents, such as curriculum plans. I also listened to pupils read to staff. I considered 48 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I also considered 11 responses to the staff survey.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Costello
Her Majesty's Inspector