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Paul Bridgmount
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bridgmount

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Risley Lower Grammar CE (VC) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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.

Context

Since the last full inspection conducted in January 2020, a new chair of the governing body has been appointed. A temporary deputy headteacher was also appointed for three terms. Since the additional monitoring visit conducted in

February 2021, a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has been appointed.

Main findings

Despite the onset of COVID-19 shortly after the school's last section 5 inspection, leaders have done much to redesign and strengthen the school's curriculum. Plans in each subject set out what pupils will learn and when. Content in each subject has been carefully sequenced. The curriculum is ambitious.

The early years leader has quickly addressed the weaknesses in the early years curriculum. It now sets out precisely what children will learn and when. The early years curriculum prepares children well for the full range of subjects that they will study in key stage 1.

Leaders have put in place a system for checking on how well pupils are learning the curriculum in key stages 1 and 2. However, there are too many checks. Leaders are slimming these down. They are now identifying the most important knowledge within each subject. Teachers can then check how well pupils have learned this key knowledge.

Early reading is taught well. The school's phonics programme is well planned and sequenced. The programme is taught consistently well. Pupils who begin to fall behind get extra phonics teaching to help them to catch up. The books that pupils read match the sounds that they know.

Teachers are checking more carefully on how pupils in key stage 2 are learning to read. They identify which pupils are falling behind and give them extra time and help to catch up. Pupils who are behind in phonics get extra, daily lessons. Leaders have carefully planned the genres, authors and texts that pupils will study each term. More books have been purchased so that pupils have a wider range of texts to choose from. However, some older pupils say that the books do not challenge them as much as they would like.

Work to develop leadership in the school has begun but is in the early stages. Most of the recent work on the curriculum has been completed by the headteacher. Subject leaders have not been involved. Consequently, subject leaders do not have a good enough understanding of the curriculum planning and sequencing in the areas for which they are responsible. They have not been given the chance to develop these skills.

The help that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive is inconsistent. Some teachers do not plan clearly enough what they want these pupils to learn and how they will learn it. There is a new SENCo. She is ambitious for pupils with SEND. She has started to improve provision but recognises

that there is much more to be done to improve the quality of education for these pupils.

Governors know what is working well in the school and what needs to improve. They are quick to address weaknesses and to check on how things are improving. They recognise the importance of developing leadership and have changed the school's leadership structure to help do this.

Additional support

The school has benefited from the support of the local authority. They have used this support to begin the work to develop subject leadership.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, safeguarding leaders, a representative of the local authority and two governors to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with the early years leader, the SENDCo, a group of staff and a group of pupils. I visited lessons and listened to pupils read to adults in school. I looked at documentation in relation to safeguarding as well as the school's plans for improvement. I considered the 13 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including six free-text responses, and 13 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Vic Wilkinson
Her Majesty's Inspector