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Tracy McKenzie
Headteacher
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Dear Miss McKenzie

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hillside Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 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.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that any gaps in pupils' knowledge are filled so that new learning in science, art, geography and history builds securely on what pupils know already

- enable staff to improve the conduct of the small number of pupils who do not behave well during social times.

Context

The headteacher in post at the time of the previous inspection subsequently left the school and an interim headteacher was appointed. An executive headteacher was appointed in January 2020 who took on the leadership of the school when the interim headteacher left in spring 2020. You started as permanent headteacher in September 2020.

Main findings

The leadership team has been restructured since the last inspection. The senior leadership team work closely together, supported by a middle leadership team. All leaders share the same vision of what good education at Hillside would look like. Plans for improvement are clear. Leaders have set appropriate priorities. These do not overload staff, who are making the necessary improvements rapidly.

I visited lessons and looked at pupils' work with school leaders. The approaches to teaching English and mathematics are highly consistent across the school and mean that the quality of teaching and learning is improving. Early reading is taught in groups matched to pupils' attainment; pupils read books that are a good match for the letters and sounds that they already know and have access to a well-stocked library. Pupils say that teachers help them to learn what they need to know. These improvements are helping pupils to catch up, produce higher quality work and close the gaps in their understanding.

Teachers now know the importance of repetition in helping pupils to remember things, and of ensuring new learning builds on what pupils already know. A new curriculum for science, history, geography and art has been trialled and is to be implemented fully from September. Teachers have started to fill some of the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding in these subjects. This work is at an early stage.

Teachers provide effective support within the classroom, as required, so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can learn the intended curriculum. Most pupils with SEND are provided for within their classes, with appropriate adaptations to enable them to access the curriculum. A very small number of pupils with SEND receive additional support with their emotional and behavioural needs, both within and outside of school.

Teachers are promoting pupils' cultural awareness through religious education and the personal, health and social education curriculum, for example celebrating Eid al-

Fitr in assembly and discussion. Some social, moral and cultural opportunities such as whole school celebrations, clubs and trips out have not been possible as a result of COVID-19.

Attendance is now at 94%. Leaders know there is still work to be done; the appointment of an attendance officer from June 2021 will focus on those harder to reach groups who often move between countries and schools.

Behaviour during lessons is now calm. Most children listen carefully to their teachers and get on quickly with their work. Staff manage pupils' behaviour less effectively during social times. As a result, the behaviour of a few pupils during lunchtime can be too boisterous.

Additional support

Training and support from the multi-academy trust and the Ambition Institute has meant all teachers share the same understanding of what needs to be done and how if pupils are to learn well. Future training is planned for support staff to benefit from this too.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and representatives of the multi-academy trust, including the chief executive officer. I visited lessons and sampled work alongside school leaders. I spoke to two groups of pupils and observed playtimes.

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

Yours sincerely

Tessa Holledge
Her Majesty's Inspector