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Richard Pallant
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Pallant

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woolenwick Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 11 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 ensure that:

- governors focus on the impact of the actions leaders are taking to improve the school quickly and robustly
- leaders maintain the momentum of improvement so that all pupils benefit from an effective curriculum across all subjects and achieve well as a result.

Context

The previous section 5 inspection took place only a month before the first national lockdown began in March 2020. Leaders have nevertheless continued to focus on the areas of improvement that were identified by the inspection while also providing education for pupils during the pandemic.

You joined the school at the start of the summer term. Since the previous section 5 inspection, the headteacher and special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) have both left the school. An acting headteacher was appointed in April 2020. The deputy headteacher joined the school in September and a SENCo was appointed from within the school staff. The acting headteacher left the school in April 2021. During this time, two governors have left the governing body and new governors have joined.

Main findings

Leaders acted promptly to identify the actions they needed to take to improve the school. Leaders have maintained a focus on these actions despite the challenges of the pandemic. You are working with the deputy headteacher and school leaders. You have a clear understanding of the priorities for improvement so that you can continue to move the school forward.

A culture of high expectations is developing across the school. Teaching is more rigorous because curriculum plans are clearly focused on what pupils should know and be able to do. You are providing professional challenge and support for staff to develop their practice. Pupils are making gains in their learning as a result.

Leaders are supporting staff to develop an ambitious curriculum across all subjects. Coordinators are knowledgeable and confident in their roles. The plans and resources that are already in place are helping pupils know more and remember more from the subjects they study. The curriculum for science and history is more established than in other subjects, such as design technology and music. Work to address this is already well underway.

There is a strong focus on reading across the school. You are ensuring that pupils read in school every day to help them build up their reading stamina. Pupils are reading more challenging texts. Pupils have opportunities to read for enjoyment and for purpose. Less confident readers are given the support they need to catch up quickly. The reading curriculum is helping pupils develop the skills they need to become more confident and critical readers.

The SENCo has introduced more rigorous processes to assess and review the needs of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). She works with

staff to ensure they are making suitable adjustments in their teaching so that pupils with SEND achieve well.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They are beginning to challenge leaders more robustly, focusing on the impact of leaders' actions to improve the school. Governors have reviewed their procedures for appointing new governors. This is to ensure that the governing body possesses a range of relevant skills and experience.

Your plans for improving the school are well considered. They show you are clear about what you need to do to improve the school so that pupils receive a good quality of education.

Additional support

Leaders work closely with the Hertfordshire Improvement Partner (HIP) who makes regular visits to the school. Together they review the progress the school is making towards becoming a good school. The HIP also works with staff to support the improvement of the curriculum. The support provided by the local authority is appropriately focused on the priorities leaders have identified in their school improvement plans.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other leaders. I also met with members of the governing body. These meetings were to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. I met with the family liaison officer and with the designated safeguarding lead. I looked at the school's single central record of pre-employment checks. I visited classrooms with leaders, and I observed pupils reading. I reviewed the plans leaders have put together to improve the school, the minutes of governing body meetings, and records of visits from the school's improvement partners. I reviewed the 10 responses that were submitted to Ofsted's Parent View and the 20 responses to the survey for staff.

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

Yours sincerely

Katherine Douglas
Her Majesty's Inspector