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26 May 2021

Maria Ellel  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Ellel

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wellfield Methodist and Anglican Church School**

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.**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that subject leaders receive the support that they need to:

- carefully define and sequence the important knowledge they intend pupils to learn in their subjects
- help teachers to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) within their subjects.

## **Context**

A new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) joined the school in September 2020. A new deputy headteacher is due to join the school in September 2021. You are hopeful that, from September 2021, permanent members of staff will fulfil all roles within the school. At the start of the school year, you made many changes to subject leadership. Many subject leaders started leading the subject or subjects that they currently lead in September 2020.

## **Main findings**

Since the school's last section 5 inspection in January 2020, you have continued to focus on developing many aspects of the school's work. You have stabilised staffing levels and galvanised the school community after several years of instability. The staff whom I spoke to told me that morale is much higher than it has been in the past. They also said that staff share a commitment to provide pupils with the best education possible. These developments have secured a strong foundation for future improvement.

You have maintained the school's strengths. Pupils have continued to attend regularly and behave well. The pupils whom I spoke to were very complimentary about the school and its staff.

Your plans to improve the school are broad and ambitious. You have amended your plans thoughtfully in response to the challenges posed by COVID-19. You have successfully implemented many aspects of your plans, such as those relating to SEND and the development of English. However, you have been less successful in other areas, such as the development of the curriculum in some subjects. This, in part, is due to factors beyond the school's control.

You have continued to develop the school's strategy to improve pupils' reading. Leaders have simplified the school's approach to teaching phonics. Staff now follow a single programme rather than using a range of resources from different schemes. This is helping to ensure that the school's approach is consistent and systematic. All staff have been trained on this simpler approach. You have purchased a new suite of reading books. This makes sure that pupils consistently read books that match their phonic knowledge. You have introduced several new systems to help weaker readers in different year groups. Where appropriate, these align with the school's teaching of phonics.

You have also focused on developing the design and delivery of the mathematics curriculum. This is at an earlier stage of development than your work to improve the teaching of reading. You are in the process of introducing a new curriculum for mathematics. You intend to use the new curriculum to improve pupils' mathematical reasoning and problem solving, but your work in this area is at an early stage.

You and other leaders have made significant improvements to the school's systems for identifying, assessing and supporting pupils with SEND. Staff are alert to any signs that a pupil may be struggling in relation to their peers. Pupils are having their needs assessed in a more timely manner. This has led to a significant increase in the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. The SENCo and other staff ensure that pupils with SEND receive better support from within school and from external professionals such as speech and language therapists. Leaders are at a much earlier stage in their work to support subject leaders and teachers to meet these pupils' needs through the adaptation and delivery of subject curriculums. Teachers are still not routinely meeting these pupils' needs through their teaching of different subjects.

You have had less success developing the curriculum in most subjects beyond English and mathematics. Many subject leaders are new to their roles. They have not received the support that they need to develop the content and delivery of their subject curriculums. You believe that the COVID-19 restrictions have made it more difficult to access subject-specific support. Subject leaders have produced many documents that relate to their subject. However, they have not thought carefully about the important knowledge that teachers should teach. They have also not considered the order in which pupils should learn new information.

There is still too much variation in the way that teachers plan learning. In many subjects, teachers still decide the content that they teach. As a result, pupils do not learn a coherent body of knowledge. Beyond English, mathematics, history and physical education, teachers have not been supported to develop subject-specific approaches to teaching. Continued staffing instability and the challenges created by COVID-19 have reduced the amount of time you have been able to dedicate to the development of the wider curriculum.

Governors have strengthened their oversight of the school. Governors now link to key areas, such as different subjects, SEND and safeguarding. Governors hold you and other leaders to account for your work to improve the school. They ask probing questions about many aspects of the quality of education. However, they have not paid enough attention to the substance of subject curriculums.

### **Additional support**

The local authority has supported the development of the school's leadership. The local authority has also helped you and other leaders to improve the design and delivery of the curriculum in both English and mathematics. For example, staff from the local authority have trained all staff to teach phonics.

A national leader of education has also supported you. You have used this support to clarify the strategy for improving the school. As yet, external support has had

little impact on improving subject leadership or the quality of the curriculum in most subjects beyond English and mathematics.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, governors and representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I looked at documents relating to the school's development of the curriculum. I looked at a sample of pupils' work and watched some pupils read to staff. I also considered 16 responses to the staff survey and 59 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 17 comments submitted via the free-text facility.

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

Yours sincerely

Will Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**