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Simon Robertson
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Dear Mr Robertson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Broadlands 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 three 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:

- evaluate how successfully the new curriculum plans, in subjects other than English or mathematics, are building pupils' knowledge and skills over time and make any required amendments to these plans in response to the evaluations.

Context

This is the second on-site monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement. The school received an additional remote monitoring inspection in February 2021.

Leaders feel that the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed the progress of some of their improvement plans. However, they are already getting plans back on track.

There have been some changes in governance since the last on-site monitoring inspection. Two governors have left, and three new governors have joined the governing body.

Main findings

The leadership team are aware of the school's strengths. They are also very clear about, and are focussing on, the areas that require further work. They are rightly proud of their efforts to improve the school. Leaders are frustrated that the partial closure of schools linked to COVID-19 delayed some of their improvement plans. However, they are already making up for lost time. Leaders see the professional development of staff as a crucial element in improving the school. As a result, they have organised training for staff linked to mathematics, communication and language, writing and metacognition. This training has had a positive impact on improving teaching across the school.

Leaders have continued to develop the mathematics curriculum with great success. Training linked to mastery in mathematics has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching across the school. Leaders say that mathematical reasoning is now threaded throughout the week and at different times within individual lessons. This is evident in pupils' books. Pupils say they enjoy mathematics and understand the importance of it in everyday life. They explain how they use reasoning in lessons and provide lots of examples of this. Pupils say, 'we have to prove and explain how we know things, and how we have worked it out'.

Leaders prioritised the teaching of phonics and reading in their remote education offer. The teaching of phonics in the early years classes, Year 1 and beyond remains high on the school's agenda. When schools fully reopened in March, teachers checked younger pupils' phonic knowledge to identify any areas of lost learning. Staff wasted no time plugging gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge to help them catch up. There is a consistent approach to teaching phonics across the school, which supports pupils' learning well. A range of quality texts are at the heart of the English curriculum. Whole class teaching of reading across the school continues to improve pupils' reading comprehension. The reading leader has organised a range of special events to promote the love of reading, such as a 'bedtime story day' and 'blind book dating'.

At the previous on-site monitoring inspection, it was noted that the quality of handwriting varied across the school. This is still the case in some year groups. The quality of presentation in some pupils' books is not good enough. Leaders say this is partly due to lockdown. However, they agree that lower teacher expectations in some year groups contribute towards this.

Subject leaders, supported by senior leaders, have created brand new curriculum plans in subjects other than English and mathematics. They consulted with teachers during this process. The plans follow the school's 'head-hands-heart' approach. The plans clearly map out the important knowledge that pupils will learn in each unit of work. Teachers are in the early stages of using these plans. Subject leaders plan to check how the plans are being used. They will then review, refine and adapt the plans in light of their findings. The aim is to make sure that pupils' knowledge and skills build in each subject.

Staff are very supportive of leaders and they enjoy working at the school. Staff comment that leaders are mindful of their well-being and that workload is manageable.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work. They value the work that leaders and staff are doing to support their children.

Governors are clear about their role to challenge and support school leaders. During the pandemic, they focused on ensuring that pupils continued to have access to education. Supporting the well-being of staff was also a priority for them. At this time, governors took their focus off monitoring curriculum improvements. However, they understand that this is a crucial part of their work to ensure that leaders improve the school. Moving forwards, governors have plans in place to monitor the quality of education across the school.

The school's development plan includes the priorities identified at the most recent on-site monitoring inspection. Some aspects of the development plan are too general. This makes it difficult to evaluate the success of specific improvement plans. This is in contrast to the school development plan from the previous year that was sharply focused on the key areas for improvement. Leaders clearly articulated how they plan to put together their new school development plan, which will return to the previous format.

Additional support

The school is part of a federation that includes two other schools. Subject leaders from the three schools work together to share good practice. They support each other to make improvements in their respective curriculum areas. In normal circumstances, specialist teachers from the secondary school teach physical

education (PE) and modern foreign languages across Broadlands. This is raising standards in these subjects and supports the transition to the secondary school.

The local authority has supported the school with COVID-19 related tasks. They have also brokered support for the school from national leaders in education, particularly in relation to leadership. School leaders value this support.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the head of learning, subject leaders and six members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also spoke with a representative of the local authority.

I examined the school's single central record of background checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children prior to employment. I reviewed the school's development plan and minutes of governing body meetings. I met with two separate groups of pupils to talk about the quality of education in mathematics and history. I looked at curriculum plans alongside pupils' books.

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

Yours sincerely

Wayne Simner
Her Majesty's Inspector