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Emma McCann
Executive Headteacher
Radford Primary Academy
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Dear Mrs McCann

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Radford Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 08 June 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 key subject knowledge is mapped out from the early years to Year 6 to enable pupils to build on prior learning.

Context

You were appointed as executive headteacher in January 2020. A new associate headteacher and assistant headteacher joined in September 2020. You also appointed a new pastoral manager who started in January 2021.

During the spring lockdown 2021, you were able to continue with the delivery of your curriculum. Some adjustments were made to topics, particularly in key stage 1, so that learning could continue while most pupils were working at home.

Main findings

Since your appointment, you have established high expectations for the school and the pupils. Together with support from the trust and other school leaders, you have set about making improvements to the curriculum and other areas of the school's work. You have strengthened the leadership team with the appointment of a new associate headteacher to oversee the curriculum. You have also restructured the pastoral team to provide more effective support to pupils. These changes are making a positive difference.

Leaders recognise that there was a lack of consistency in how the curriculum and behaviour systems were implemented previously. They have acted swiftly to develop new curriculum plans for all subjects and there is now a clear behaviour policy, which sets out expectations for staff and pupils.

In mathematics, leaders have ensured all teachers follow a clear lesson structure. This is helping pupils to develop their mathematical fluency, reasoning and problem solving. The subject leader has worked closely with a mastery mathematics hub and provided training to staff in how to teach the subject more effectively. Consequently, there is greater consistency in the way mathematics is taught.

You have worked hard to strengthen subjects in the wider curriculum. In science and geography, for example, leaders have mapped pupils' learning for each year group under a half-termly theme. Leaders have identified what they want pupils to learn by the end of each year. However, at this stage, it is unclear what knowledge pupils need to know to fully achieve the learning mapped out. Leaders also recognise that further work is required so that subject knowledge builds from the early years right through to Year 6.

Leaders continue to make reading a priority for the school. Early checks on learning in nursery indicate that pupils arrive at the school with weak communication and language skills. Children quickly begin learning pre-phonics sounds in nursery and then have daily phonics sessions in Reception. Regular checks on pupils' sounds means that teachers quickly spot those pupils who have gaps in their phonics

knowledge. Small group intervention sessions with learning support assistants helps pupils who fall behind to keep up with other children. Staff continue to receive regular phonics training to improve their practice. As a result, children make strong progress in their early reading.

Leaders have also taken action to improve the teaching of reading in key stage 2. The school have introduced a new approach to whole class reading and have worked closely with an external consultant to look at developing key reading skills. Books have been mapped to each year group so that pupils experience a range of fiction, non-fiction and poetry, which gradually becomes more challenging. Texts also link closely to the school's thematic approach in the wider curriculum. Leaders are clear about how this is helping pupils to improve their reading.

Governors are highly knowledgeable and provide effective support and challenge to the school. Members of the local governing body regularly visit the school to meet with leaders and discuss school policies. These visits have continued this past year, albeit remotely. Governors have clear areas of responsibility and information is communicated effectively to the board of trustees. Governors recognise that further work is needed to strengthen the wider curriculum. They have full confidence in the school's leadership team and the actions they are taking to improve the school.

Additional support

The school receives support from an external reading consultant. They visit the school on a termly basis to look at how phonics is delivered and suggest improvements. They also provide coaching to staff and work alongside individual pupils to help develop their phonic knowledge.

The school has benefited from the support provided by the trust. Your appointment as executive headteacher from an outstanding primary school in the trust has strengthened leadership and brought about a greater sense of urgency for school improvement. The school effectively collaborates with the other primary school in the trust to share ideas and discuss ways to improve the curriculum. A teaching and learning consultant from the trust visits the school weekly to deliver training and oversee a coaching programme.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, other senior leaders, the multi-academy trust chief executive officer, pupils and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I also looked at curriculum plans and information on the school's website. I evaluated responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View including 11 free-text responses, and 17 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Howes
Her Majesty's Inspector