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Dear Mr Prior

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wenlock CofE Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 13 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:

- leaders implement curriculum plans in information and communication technology (ICT) that enable pupils to develop their knowledge securely

- governors provide a robust level of challenge to school leaders to improve further the quality of education
- readers at all ability levels in all year groups have access to high-quality reading books in the school library.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection visit in March 2019, staffing at the school has remained consistent. The chair of governors remains the same. Six governors have left the governing body and four have joined.

From January 2021, the headteacher has been the acting headteacher for the neighbouring infant school, working flexibly across both schools throughout the week.

Main findings

Since the first monitoring inspection in March 2019, essential actions to improve the school have happened swiftly. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, you have remained steadfast in your determination to make Wenlock CofE Junior School a good school. You have precise knowledge of what needs to be done. This is well known by all staff. Staff told me that they enjoy working at the school and feel well supported by leaders in making the necessary improvements. Staff appreciate leaders' efforts to promote their well-being and work-life balance. Morale is high.

The previous inspection report identified the need for leaders to embed the recently introduced teaching approaches. Subject leaders have developed ambitious curriculum plans despite the pandemic. The new well-designed curriculum reflects the needs of pupils. Detailed plans identify what pupils need to know and when it is to be taught. Staff receive subject training. This ensures that they have the knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum effectively. Staff use assessment to identify what pupils know and can do. This helps teachers to plan new learning. Pupils communicate clearly what they know and remember. For example, pupils can explain recent work they did on angles in mathematics.

The curriculum plans have not been fully implemented in all subjects across all the year groups. This is due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders have more work to do to ensure that there is a high-quality ICT curriculum in place which provides teachers with an order of what to teach and when.

Adults support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities well. Teachers make suitable adjustments in their teaching to help clarify misconceptions. Pupils are supported to help them understand new knowledge.

Leaders make reading a high priority. Pupils read regularly and enjoy being read to by their teachers. Staff teach phonics effectively to help pupils catch up with their reading. Pupils enjoy the themed reading areas in their classrooms. Teachers ensure that reading books match pupils' reading abilities. Nonetheless, the library does not provide a stimulating learning environment. It does not have appropriate reading texts for all ability pupils in all year groups.

The previous inspection report identified the need to strengthen governors' understanding of how well pupils are doing in subjects other than English and mathematics. Governors now meet with foundation subject leaders. This is to find out about the curriculum and how far pupils are progressing towards challenging curriculum goals. Governors receive information about the school's work towards meeting the targets. These are set out in well-thought-through improvement plans. However, governors do not ask searching enough questions about the effectiveness of the school's work. This limits their capacity to support school improvement.

Additional support

You work closely with the local authority, which provides challenge and support. The school improvement partner is in regular contact. She provides timely advice about the quality of education to help guide you as you make improvements to the school. Subject leaders have received support to develop their curriculum plans.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, staff, pupils, representatives of those responsible for governance and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I carried out visits to lessons, scrutinised minutes of governing body meetings, considered 41 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and viewed eight free-text responses and 39 responses made by staff to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop
Her Majesty's Inspector