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Catherine Rindl
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Dear Mrs Rindl

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Queen Victoria Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 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:

- continue improving pupils' behaviour in lessons by ensuring that staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy.

Context

Leaders and governors have made changes to the structure of the staff team since the last section 5 inspection. The school no longer employs lunchtime supervisors and high-level teaching assistants. Some of these staff now work as teaching assistants. In addition to these changes, a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) working on a temporary basis has left. An existing deputy headteacher became the SENCo in September 2020. The key stage 1 mathematics leader has left. The key stage 2 mathematics leader is now responsible for leading the subject across the whole school.

Leaders took action to improve the school immediately after the previous section 5 inspection. However, less than one term later, the first national lockdown disrupted improvement work. Pupils have not learned all of the curriculum content in some subjects as they usually would. For example, pupils did not learn French or design technology during spring 2021. Teachers started teaching all curriculum subjects when all pupils returned to school on 8 March 2021.

Plans for curriculum leaders to work with a national leader of education have been delayed because of COVID-19. You intend for this work to take place in the next academic year.

Main findings

You have high expectations and are focused on ensuring that the school continues to improve. Leaders work together well. Their roles are clear and you check that they are doing a good job. School action plans prioritise the right things to help the school improve. These plans are helpful to leaders and governors because they provide specific targets and timescales. Leaders use these targets to check the success of their work.

Governors are committed to improving the school. They care deeply about the quality of education that pupils receive and hold leaders accountable. Individual governors focus on key priorities well. They meet with curriculum leaders regularly and are interested to know the reasons for the decisions that leaders make. They ask searching questions to check that leaders' actions are making a positive difference. These individual governors report their findings back to the governing body. Consequently, governors have an accurate view of the school.

Leaders place reading at the heart of improvement plans. They work together with other local schools and with an external reading consultant. This work has helped to develop staff expertise in teaching phonics. As a result, there is a more consistent approach to teaching pupils how to read. Leaders made further improvements when all pupils returned to school on 8 March 2021. For example, they have increased the number of staff who support younger pupils in reading lessons. This means pupils read to adults more often. This extra practise is helping more pupils to become

fluent readers. Leaders have also introduced additional reading practise sessions for pupils in key stage 2. Teachers use these lessons to teach pupils how to understand what they have read. This helps pupils to answer questions about the books that they read.

Leaders have developed teachers' understanding of how to teach pupils to write. They have ensured that teachers know what knowledge and skills pupils need to learn year by year. Teachers from different year groups work together to share and discuss examples of pupils' writing. As a result, teachers are becoming more skilful in knowing the standards pupils should achieve in each year.

The mathematics leader works with a team of staff to improve the mathematics curriculum. This team approach helps staff to share experiences and ideas. In addition, leaders work with staff from other successful schools to develop their knowledge of teaching mathematics well. This support is making a positive difference. For instance, teachers are becoming better at explaining and demonstrating new methods to pupils. This has improved the quality of work that pupils produce.

Leaders ensured that curriculum plans were in place for all subjects before the coronavirus pandemic. However, in some foundation subjects, such as geography, these plans are unclear about the specific knowledge, skills and vocabulary that teachers expect pupils to know and remember. Leaders have also identified that some teachers do not have the expert knowledge required to teach these subjects well. You have put plans in place to develop teachers' subject knowledge in these subjects.

Leaders have worked to improve pupils' behaviour and attendance. They have increased the help available to pupils who need support to manage their behaviour. For example, leaders opened an additional nurture room in September 2020. This room is a place for staff to provide focused emotional and behavioural support to pupils who need it. Leaders have also worked with staff to help them become more active in managing pupils' behaviour. Most staff now believe that pupils' behaviour has improved. Many parents are also positive about the way that leaders manage behaviour. However, there remains work to do. There are still incidents when some pupils distract others in lessons. Some staff are not consistent in their approach to managing behaviour.

Additional support

The local authority has supported leaders in introducing a new early years curriculum. Leaders have used this support to develop staff expertise in the early years. As a result, staff plan learning experiences that have more precise links to early years outcomes. Staff now think more carefully about the purpose of the resources that children use. This is improving the quality of education in the early years.

Evidence

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

I reviewed the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan and minutes of governors' meetings. I scrutinised the school's single central register of checks on staff. I looked at curriculum plans alongside pupils' workbooks. I also visited lessons with the headteacher. In addition, I reviewed responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text responses, and 33 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Leonard
Her Majesty's Inspector