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Jonathan Bell
Principal
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Dear Mr Bell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Werneth Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 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 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:

- ensure that teachers use curriculum plans well to design learning that builds on what pupils know and can do in physical education (PE), computing, languages and music

- develop further teachers' expertise in delivering the new approach to the early reading and phonics curriculums so that pupils, including children in the early years, have more opportunities to practise the sounds that they know.

Context

You have been in post as principal since September 2020. During that time, one assistant principal has left the school and six new teachers have joined. Since the previous inspection in May 2019, many new governors have been appointed. A new chair of the local governing body has also taken up their post.

Since September 2020, the school has undergone substantial disruption due to the impact of COVID-19, including considerable rates of staff and pupil absence. Your work to improve the school has continued, albeit slower than you planned.

Main findings

You, school leaders and governors have prioritised your actions to improve the school appropriately. At the time of the previous inspection, curriculum plans were not helping pupils to learn well. You have made improvements to subject curriculums. Your improvement plans focus on the key actions that you, other leaders, staff and governors must take to continue to bring about developments in a timely manner.

Firstly, you focused your attention on the development of curriculums in reading, writing and mathematics. This was driven by the recommendations that inspectors made at the previous inspection. Following the design of well-planned and more ambitious curriculums in these subjects, you extended this work to other subjects. As a result, curriculums in English, mathematics, science, history and geography are sequenced well. The new art and design curriculum has been planned and recently introduced across the school. In many subjects, teachers now pay closer attention to what pupils have learned before. As a result, teachers design learning to allow pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to build effectively on what they know already.

Subject leaders have continued to develop curriculum plans across subjects. It has not been easy for you to put these plans into practice due to the disruption caused by COVID-19. However, now that most staff and pupils are back in school you are better placed to bring your curriculum plans to fruition. Teachers are delivering improved curriculums across subjects. That said, teachers are only just beginning to deliver curriculums in PE, languages, music and computing. As a result, there are times when teachers do not design learning in these subjects that builds on what pupils know already.

As part of your work to improve the school's curriculum, you have ensured that subject leaders check on how well teachers are delivering curriculums. Subject

leaders are in the process of developing the expertise of those staff who are less experienced. For example, subject leaders support these staff to plan and deliver key content. Most staff have benefited from a wealth of training to help them deliver new curriculums. Staff are appreciative of the high levels of training they have received since your appointment.

The teaching of reading remains central to your improvement plans. Historically the school has accumulated a myriad of reading schemes. This meant that teachers often found it difficult to match books with the sounds that pupils know. You are in the process of ensuring a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the school, including in the early years. The disruption caused by the pandemic has delayed the planned delivery of this approach. However, you are in the process of rolling this approach out across year groups, including plans to ensure that all staff receive appropriate training in how to deliver the phonics curriculum effectively. You have also put suitable systems in place to develop pupils' reading comprehension and fluency. This is helping older pupils to read well. Those pupils in key stage 2 who need additional help with phonics receive tailored support. This includes support for those pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Governors know the school well. They share your determination to improve the school. To this end, governors hold you and other leaders to account effectively. They are well informed about the changes to the curriculum and the school's approach to the teaching of early reading. This is helping them to support and challenge you and other leaders to accelerate and sustain the pace of improvement.

Additional support

The school has benefited from a range of support from within the trust. The trust has also facilitated support for the school from both a local teaching school and the local authority. You explained to me that you felt reassured that the help the school receives from the trust is bespoke and supportive.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other members of the senior leadership team. I spoke with a group of subject leaders and other teaching staff. I met with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust (MAT) and the chair of the board of trustees. I also met with three members of the local governing board, including the chair of governors, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons and spoke with pupils about their learning. I observed children and pupils read to trusted adults. I scrutinised school leaders' plans to improve the school and a range of curriculum documentation. I also considered the 16 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including four free-text comments and 31 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of The Pinnacle Learning Trust MAT, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oldham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

John Donald
Her Majesty's Inspector