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Nicola Lightwing
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Dear Mrs Lightwing

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Manor 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 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:

- refine the action plan to include specific timescales and information about who will monitor and evaluate the impact of the actions taken

- ensure that subject leaders receive the support that they need so that curriculum plans in some subjects, other than English and mathematics, specify what teachers need to teach and when.

Context

Since the previous inspection, you have appointed a new leader of early years and new subject leaders for geography and history have taken up post. A new chair and vice-chair of governors have recently been appointed. Several new governors have also joined the governing body.

There has been considerable turbulence in senior leadership in this small school. During the headteacher's absence, the deputy headteacher was in charge of the school for 12 months. The headteacher returned to her post in January 2021. Leaders' plans for improvement have been disrupted by the absence of the headteacher and deputy headteacher due to COVID-19 for a period of time during the spring term. A senior leader was in charge of the school for a period of three weeks in the spring term.

Main findings

Despite the recent turbulence in leadership and the impact of COVID-19, you and the staff have continued to work on improving the school. The pandemic has meant that the development of some curriculum subjects has been slower than you planned. That said, there are early signs of improvement and you are back on the right lines to bring about your planned improvements.

Your action plan has a strong focus on the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. It also takes account of other areas within the school that you have identified need further development. However, your plans are not as helpful to you, other leaders and governors as they could be. They lack clear timescales for some actions. It is also unclear who is responsible for checking that your planned actions have the desired impact.

Despite the challenges that you have faced over the past year, you have maintained a clear focus on improving reading. You have improved teachers' subject knowledge of phonics from the Nursery class through to Year 2. Teachers address pupils' misconceptions quickly. This means that pupils can learn from their mistakes. Assessment is used well to identify pupils who have fallen behind in their reading. You ensure that weaker readers receive the support that they need to catch up quickly. Pupils read books that are carefully matched to their phonics knowledge. You have upgraded the school library with high-quality texts to enrich pupils' reading experiences.

When HMI monitored the school in March, they asked you to provide high-quality phonics training for all staff in key stage 2 so that they are well equipped to support

the weakest readers. You have acted on this. Teachers are now better placed to support weaker readers as they enter Year 3 and move through key stage 2.

At the previous inspection, inspectors noted weaknesses in curriculum planning of subjects other than English and mathematics. You began to make improvements to the quality of education in these subjects. In some subjects, such as science, leaders have clearly planned what pupils ought to know and remember. Pupils told me that teachers revisit prior learning at the start of lessons. Some pupils were able to recall what they had learned in science. However, the pandemic and staff absence have prevented you from developing other subjects in the same way. New subject leaders are at an early stage in identifying what pupils need to learn and in what order they should gain this knowledge. New subject leaders had limited support during the pandemic. Consequently, it has been difficult for them to develop their subject curriculums.

The systems for checking pupils' learning are improving. Staff have procedures in place to identify pupils who may be struggling with their learning. Teachers are using this information more effectively to put in extra support to help these pupils catch up.

Many governors are new to post. They bring a wide range of skills and expertise with them. Governors have received training from the local authority. They have created their own action plan to complement the work of leaders. Governors have started to check the impact of subject curriculums, such as mathematics. They are supportive of you and staff. Governors are not afraid to question you and senior leaders when the need arises. Each governor is now aligned to an aspect of the school. This enables them to keep up to date with developments in the school.

Pupils behave well around the school. They show respect for each other and adults during breaktimes. Staff feel that leaders and governors are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Additional support

The local authority has helped you and senior leaders to develop and evaluate the delivery of the English curriculum. They also supported senior leaders during your absence. The local authority has commissioned some extra training for the new governors and subject-specific training for new subject leaders. They have also secured the support from a multi-academy trust to develop the expertise of senior leaders and subject leaders.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, subject leaders, pupils, five members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and two school improvement partners. This was to discuss the actions taken since the last

inspection. I made short visits to phonics lessons, listened to pupils read, spoke with pupils and looked at work in their books. I examined a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings and curriculum plans. I reviewed the school's safeguarding policies and checked the single central record on the suitability of staff to work with children. I also looked at 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including four free-text responses, and 10 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector