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Nicola Brooke
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Dear Mrs Brooke

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Durweston CofE VA Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 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 three 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:

- Ensure there is clear progression in all subjects of the curriculum so that pupils can build on prior learning and remember more.

Context

A new chair of governors was appointed in September 2020.

Main findings

You have raised expectations of staff successfully. Staff value your leadership highly. You have restored the community's belief in the school. Parents speak warmly of the school and praise the work done during COVID-19 lockdowns. In the Ofsted survey, Parent View, 100% of parents would recommend the school.

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils are polite and respectful. They appreciate their school and enjoy learning.

Pupils' progress in mathematics is stronger than at the last full inspection. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and are effective in their teaching strategies.

You make sure pupils learn phonics systematically. This helps pupils, even those who struggle to read, decode words correctly. Teachers check the reading of pupils in key stage 2 so that their book choices are appropriate for their reading ability. Teachers read to pupils in every class to extend pupils' vocabulary.

The curriculum, in other subjects, is at various stages of development. COVID-19 hindered the progress of this work. Older pupils are learning science that will help them when they get to secondary school. However, in some subjects, pupils are not building on prior learning in a way that will help them to know and remember more. In such a small school, teachers are leaders of several subjects. You take care to plan training in curriculum areas sensitively. Subject leaders are working with you to develop progression maps in the subjects.

The special educational needs coordinator is well trained and passionate about her work with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). She communicates effectively with staff and parents to ensure that pupils with SEND achieve their potential.

You and the new chair of governors have allocated roles for each governor. This enables a comprehensive oversight of the impact of actions taken. Responsibility and communication among governors have improved. They are developing their strategic expertise which will provide you with much-needed support.

Additional support

The personnel from the local authority linked to the school have changed several times. This cannot be helped, but it delays the allocation of effective support for the school. There have been four SEND advisers since you took up post. A new school improvement adviser was appointed in January 2021.

The diocese works well with the school. A helpful review of the early years provision took place this term.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and an online discussion with a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I looked at safeguarding, the work of pupils and listened to pupils read. I read responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 61 free-text responses, and staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector