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Sue Bridges
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bridges

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to King Edward Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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:

- train all staff in phonics so they can choose well-matched books for pupils and use effective strategies to teach them to read words

- complete the work started to train teachers how to adapt the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
- ensure that governors check leaders' actions to improve the attendance of pupils with SEND so that they come to school regularly and benefit from the school's improving quality of education.

Context

At the time of the inspection, the deputy headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), was absent from work. Another teacher, supported by one of the assistant headteachers, is covering the role of SENCo.

Since the previous inspection, a new early years leader has been appointed. Three new governors have joined the governing body.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, leaders have worked determinedly to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. They have not let the pandemic hold them back. They are a reflective and cohesive team. They are passionate about ensuring that pupils get the best possible education.

Leaders have maintained a clear focus on school improvement. They have effective plans in place to continue this positive work. They have improved the curriculum offer and started to identify what knowledge pupils need to learn and when. This is well under way in all subjects. Teachers have an improved understanding of what they need to teach so that pupils are better prepared for the next stages of education.

The delivery of the planned curriculum is becoming more successful. Most teachers choose activities that build pupils' understanding. Pupils are beginning to know and remember more about what they are taught.

Senior leaders, together with support from the local authority, have developed an effective approach to training subject leaders. Each subject leader has a coach who helps them to develop the curriculum. Together, staff complete regular 'subject delves' when leaders check what pupils know and remember. They use this information to identify what they need to do next to improve pupils' achievement. Subject leadership is a growing strength of the school.

Subject leaders for languages, history and music have a secure understanding of each subject curriculum. They have excellent subject knowledge. They use this well to train and support non-specialist staff.

Leaders have begun to skilfully connect knowledge across some subjects. For example, in music, pupils learn about Duke Ellington and jazz. Teachers link this knowledge to the study of the Second World War in history. Pupils build a stronger understanding of what life was like during this period.

Leaders want pupils to build a strong vocabulary. They have started to adapt curriculum plans in some subjects. These plans show when ambitious vocabulary will be taught and revisited. For example, in history, teachers revisit language such as 'hierarchy', 'empire' and 'society' to help deepen pupils' understanding.

Leaders have worked hard to improve the phonics programme. Pupils learn phonics from the start of the early years. Teachers know what phonics knowledge they need to teach and when. Leaders have adapted the curriculum in light of COVID-19. They know that some pupils struggle to blend sounds together. Teachers in the Nursery class spend more time focusing on this skill. Pupils who have fallen behind get extra help to catch up.

Leaders have made sure that there are now books in the school that are appropriate to help pupils use their phonics knowledge to help them to learn to read. Most pupils receive books that are well matched to the phonics knowledge they already have. However, there are still some pupils who do not. Staff do not always check well enough the books that these pupils read. Some staff do not know how to help pupils who struggle to blend sounds to read words.

Children in the early years get off to a flying start. Staff set up purposeful activities that build children's knowledge. For example, children plant sunflowers. They talk scientifically about how the seeds will change if given water and sunlight.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils with SEND. They are committed to ensuring that these pupils gain the same knowledge as others. Staff in the Sunflower nurture group provide excellent support for pupils with complex needs. Subject leaders are starting to support teachers so they can adapt the curriculum effectively in lessons. This work is not yet complete. Some staff do not know how to help pupils with SEND access learning. Some of these pupils do not attend school regularly enough. They do not achieve as well as they could.

Governors have a growing understanding of the quality of education that pupils receive throughout the curriculum. They are keen to learn more. The chair of governors is working hard to improve the knowledge and skills of the governing body. Governors hold leaders to account well in most instances. However, they do not hold leaders to account as well as they should for their actions to improve the attendance of pupils with SEND.

Additional support

Leaders have used the support provided by the local authority well to develop the curriculum. Leaders have also valued the support from the reading specialists to improve the provision for pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read. The support is having a positive impact on raising standards across the curriculum.

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, three assistant headteachers, the mathematics and assessment leader, leaders responsible for phonics, music, languages and history, a representative of the local authority, a group of pupils and the chair of governors.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Varnam
Her Majesty's Inspector