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Alison Bailey
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Bailey

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Walpole Highway Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 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.

Leaders should take further action to:

- implement and train all staff in a clear and robust phonics programme which supports all pupils in learning to read effectively

- check the impact of the curriculum planning in all subjects, especially in mathematics, to assure themselves that pupils are making rapid gains after long periods of absence from school.

Context

Since the previous section 5 inspection in 2019, there have been very few changes to the leadership and staff.

In September 2020, an experienced governor took up the role of chair of governors. The governing body oversees all four schools across the federation.

Over the course of this last year, the school has provided remote education for pupils. In the recent national lockdown, nearly all pupils received their education at home. Parental choice and the very small take-up meant that a few pupils were on site on Thursdays and Fridays only.

Main findings

You, other leaders and governors remain focused on improving the quality of education for pupils at the school. It is clear that school improvement has slowed due to the impact of COVID-19. Subject leaders have not checked the impact of their changes to the school's curriculum as they had planned before the pandemic. This is due to restrictions in place across the four schools in the federation.

Adults provide a nurturing environment for pupils. Nearly all parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, stated that their child feels happy and safe. Staff also commented on the quality of pastoral care provided at the school.

Since the previous section 5 inspection in 2019, you have changed the curriculum for mathematics. Pupils now receive teaching which follows a logical order. Teachers adapt the content to suit the mixed-age classes. They provide time for pupils to practise what they have learned. Teachers use information from tests to provide extra lessons to help pupils catch up after periods of absence due to national COVID-19 lockdowns.

You place a high priority on reading. Leaders have designed the curriculum into topics that link to carefully selected books for each class. Pupils and staff say how much these books help pupils to develop a love of reading. However, not enough pupils can read as well as they should to achieve well. Not all adults are skilled in the teaching of a clear phonics programme. This is necessary to enable more pupils to learn to read and progress quickly.

In subjects such as science and geography, leaders have identified the most important vocabulary that they want pupils to know and remember. Leaders have

written new plans which are appropriate. Teachers are more aware of the priorities in these subjects and the demands of the national curriculum. Staff have received some training. The curriculum plans are in place, although these changes are very recent. You have firm plans for leaders in other subjects to further amend their curriculum plans.

Governors have a clear sense of where there has been progress in the school's development and where weaknesses still remain. Following a governance review, governors have participated in training so that they can better support and challenge you and your leaders. There is a clear commitment to improve. Recently, governors have taken responsibility for different subject areas. They intend to meet subject leaders to check the quality and consistency of education across the four schools in the federation.

Additional support

The local authority provides appropriate help and support to the school to improve. Local authority advisers are due to train staff in providing and adapting a good-quality curriculum to mixed-age classes in the summer term.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons, considered work in pupils' books, spoke with pupils and listened to pupils reading. I evaluated a wide range of documentation, including minutes of governors' meetings, school improvement plans and curriculum documents. I took account of 13 parental responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, and 10 responses to 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 Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector