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Ian Barton
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Dear Mr Barton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ashingdon Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 19 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:

- make sure staff have the training they need to use leaders' new curriculum plans well.

Context

The pandemic has slowed your work to implement new curriculum plans. It has stopped you from delivering some of the training staff need.

Since the previous section 5 inspection of the school, a new chair of governors has been appointed.

Main findings

You have worked rapidly and effectively to improve the school since the previous section 5 inspection. You have secured the commitment of staff so that they work together in making the school better. Collectively, you have made a tangible difference to the education pupils receive.

The teaching of early reading has improved markedly. You introduced a new system for teaching phonics. You secured training for teachers and teaching assistants in using this. Staff use their training well. Phonics teaching adheres closely to your chosen scheme.

You brought in a system for routinely assessing pupils' reading skills. This is supplemented by teachers and teaching assistants regularly checking if pupils struggle with the books they are reading. Staff match the books pupils read to pupils' phonic knowledge. Pupils can decode text and they read words accurately. Adults often read to pupils, using a range of texts. Pupils enjoy learning to read.

You are currently further developing the teaching of early reading. Staff are building vocabulary teaching into phonics lessons. You intend for this to enhance the comprehension work teachers already do in English lessons.

The required improvements in other aspects of the curriculum are progressing well. You have created clear and well-considered subject plans. These are likely to provide a strong basis from which pupils can learn the different aspects of the national curriculum. COVID-19 interrupted your plans to provide subject-specific training. At present, teachers have not had the training they need to teach the content of these plans well.

You responded effectively to the area for improvement regarding safeguarding. At the time of the previous inspection, safeguarding was judged to be effective but, there was work to do on some aspects of record keeping. Systems for reporting concerns are easy to understand and use. Concerns are now recorded appropriately.

Additional support

The multi-academy trust is supporting the school well. Through the pandemic, for example, the trust helped you adapt the curriculum for remote education. Trust

leaders made sure pupils had devices to use to access provision from home. The trust has provided resources, expertise, and training for curriculum leaders in developing new curriculum plans. Trust leaders have been instrumental in supporting your work to improve early reading. They have provided key training and guidance for staff. Early input from trust leaders has enabled school staff to run the phonics programme well.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other leaders and staff, the trust's national director of education services, the chair of the local governing board and another governor. I visited lessons, spoke with pupils, and looked at pupils' work in their books. I reviewed curriculum documents, safeguarding records, and the single central register of recruitment checks.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Hemmings
Her Majesty's Inspector