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Catherine O'Neill Edwards
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Dear Mrs O'Neill Edwards

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mendell 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 subject leaders and teachers receive subject-specific training so that they can deliver the curriculum effectively in subjects other than English and mathematics

- develop further the curriculum plans in subjects other than English and mathematics so that they set out the important knowledge that pupils need to learn and in what order so that pupils know and remember more
- ensure governors challenge leaders more effectively about the quality of education in subjects across the curriculum.

Context

Since the previous inspection, all governors, except the chair of governors, have left the governing body. Eight new governors have taken up their roles within the last two years.

There has been one change to the teaching staff since the last inspection.

Main findings

You have acted quickly to address the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. Although the pandemic has affected some aspects of your work, you have ensured that the quality of education is improving in English and mathematics. Staff and governors are working towards the same goals. They feel positive about the direction that the school is taking. You have clear plans in place to bring about further improvement.

The English leader has put in place a clear structure for pupils' learning in reading. All staff have received training in phonics to help pupils build on their prior knowledge. Pupils are quickly overcoming the disruption to their learning that was caused by the pandemic. You have ensured that there is targeted support available for pupils who need extra help. As a result, pupils are starting to apply their phonics knowledge with greater confidence and fluency.

You have successfully adapted the mathematics curriculum so that knowledge is taught in a logical order. Teachers ensure that pupils have frequent opportunities to practise key skills. This is helping pupils to become more fluent when applying their mathematics knowledge to solve calculation problems. Teachers are adapting the curriculum effectively, to help ensure that prior learning is secure before moving onto more difficult content.

Despite your efforts to improve pupils' learning in other subjects, your work in this area has had less success. Leaders have taken a wrong turn in their curriculum planning for subjects other than English and mathematics. This has hampered them from designing subject curriculums that allow pupils to know and remember more over time. The pandemic has delayed your plans for curriculum development

further. For example, you have not been able to source suitable training to enhance the subject knowledge of teachers and subject leaders.

Governors have ensured that staff's well-being has been a priority in recent months. They have asked questions of leaders about the improvements in the English and mathematics curriculum. However, they have not held leaders to account for the quality of education in other subjects.

Additional support

You have used the support provided by the local authority to develop subject leaders' knowledge, in order to design and implement improved curriculums for English and mathematics. In contrast, you are at the early stages of using the support available from leaders in other schools to review and rebuild the curriculum in other subjects.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, pupils, teaching staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited a number of phonics sessions, reviewed pupils' work in science and history and evaluated the curriculum plans for all subjects. I reviewed the minutes of governing body meetings. I also took account of 20 responses to the staff survey and 24 responses to Parent view, Ofsted's online 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

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector