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22 June 2021

Julie Wardle
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Dear Mrs Wardle

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Corpus Christi Catholic Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 9 June 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 a judgement of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspection.

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:

- develop the curriculum in science and physical education so that pupils' knowledge, skills and subject-specific vocabulary build over time

- monitor and embed the recent changes made to the teaching of reading and mathematics to help raise standards in these subjects.

Context

Since the last full inspection, two new teachers and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) have been appointed. Two new governors have been appointed, including the vice-chair. Some of leaders' plans to further develop the school's curriculum were temporarily paused because of COVID-19. As a result, some subjects have been developed more than others.

Main findings

Leaders have worked hard to improve the quality of education for all pupils. They have taken appropriate action to address the areas identified in the previous section 5 report. However, the implementation and impact of some of their actions remain at an early stage and need more time.

Leaders have a clear focus on school improvement and know what actions still need to be taken. These are set out clearly in the school's own self-evaluation and improvement plan. Leaders have prioritised curriculum development and established a broad and balanced curriculum. Some subject planning focuses solely on the skills pupils should acquire. Work has already taken place in many subjects to ensure that key knowledge pupils need to learn is also mapped out alongside the skills.

Leaders prioritise reading across the school. Teachers adopt a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1. This continues into key stage 2 for pupils who need additional support with their reading. Reading books are closely matched to the sounds pupils learn. This helps pupils build their confidence and develop their fluency. All staff have received phonics training and use this knowledge well to support weaker readers in their classes. The approach to teaching reading skills in key stage 2 is relatively new. Leaders are monitoring this approach carefully to ensure that pupils gain a deeper understanding of what they read.

Leaders have recently changed the structure of mathematics lessons. There is a focus on the teaching of basic skills and developing mathematical fluency in every lesson. Leaders' monitoring shows that pupils' confidence and speed at solving problems and reasoning are improving as a result. However, it is too early to fully assess the impact of the changes made.

Leaders' work in some of the other curriculum subjects was paused because of COVID-19. Therefore, some subjects are further ahead than others. Despite this setback, plans are in place to get back on track. For example, leaders are aware that science and physical education need further development. Leaders use a range

of assessments to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and adjust their planning accordingly.

Provision in the early years has improved since the last inspection. The early years leader is providing effective planning, support and guidance for staff. The outdoor environment has been significantly improved. This has resulted in children being more engaged in their learning. Leaders are already preparing for a new curriculum to be implemented in the autumn term. They are moving to a digital platform for recording observations of children's progress.

The SENCo is new to post and has swiftly undertaken an audit of individual pupils' needs. They have thought carefully about the most important support that will benefit pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and included these in revised plans. The school is beginning to work closely with parents and external agencies. This will help to ensure that pupils with SEND receive the support they need. Leaders have plans in place to monitor the interventions and teaching programmes pupils with SEND access.

Governors and the multi-academy company (MAC) provide challenge and support in equal measure. They speak knowledgeably about the improvements that have been made and understand the areas that still need to be developed. Governors and the MAC place a high priority on the mental health of staff and pupils. For example, a training day in the autumn term focused on well-being and strategies for managing workload. Most staff speak positively about the school and say it has improved since the last inspection.

The group of pupils spoken to knew how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. They know how to keep themselves fit and healthy and to seek the help of a trusted adult if they have any worries. However, the pupils were less confident when speaking about fundamental British values, such as tolerance. Pupils told us behaviour around school is generally good.

Additional support

The MAC has provided regular and effective support for leaders and staff to develop the quality of education. School leaders value the advisory support provided by the local authority. Support for leaders has been provided in the following areas: English, mathematics, special educational needs and early years. Leaders have also received support with the teaching of phonics from an external consultant.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff, members of the governing body, representatives from the MAC and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I looked at several documents, including school improvement plans and

curriculum plans. I also examined the single central record of staff recruitment checks. I looked at 23 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 23 free-text responses, and 21 questionnaires for staff.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the St Francis and St Clare MAC, the director of education for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector