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18 June 2021

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Dear Miss Lowe

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Kirby Hill Church of England 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 two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school 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:

- embed a systematic, synthetic phonics programme that is carefully followed by all members of staff

- support and challenge subject leaders to demonstrate the impact their actions are having on pupil progress with a focus on developing pupil motivation and positive attitudes to learning
- ensure teachers consistently plan and sequence lessons precisely, making clear what they want pupils to know and remember, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

## **Context**

There has been a significant change in senior leadership and in staffing since the inspection, which judged the school to require improvement. This, along with COVID-19, has slowed the pace of improvement. However, since September, staffing has stabilised.

A new subject leader for English joined the school in April 2020. The English and mathematics subject leaders are now part of the senior leadership team. The previous assistant head teacher and a member of staff in the early years left the school. A member of staff is on maternity leave. The chair and vice-chair of governors were new to their roles in 2020. In addition, two co-opted governors have recently joined the governing body.

## **Main findings**

You have maintained a focus on school improvement while working on the priorities identified at the previous inspection. The appointment of new staff has stabilised your workforce. The development of your new senior leadership team has increased leadership capacity in school. These changes have given you a foundation on which to build the quality of education across the school. The COVID-19 pandemic initially slowed the speed of improvements in school. Leaders are clear that these improvements must now continue at pace.

Following the last section 5 inspection, it is clear much work has been done to prioritise reading across the school. Story time is ring-fenced for all classes and a love of reading is evident through discussions with pupils. All staff have received phonics training. The books pupils read in school and at home are well matched to the sounds they know. The subject leader is working closely with the local English hub in order to ensure that the phonics programme is delivered with fidelity.

Leaders were also tasked with improving the quality of teaching, so that pupils make strong progress. Subject leaders are developing the curriculum. Long-term plans are now in place to show what pupils should learn in each subject in each year from Nursery to Year 6. However, sometimes it is unclear what teachers want pupils to know and remember about the subjects they are learning. This is

particularly evident for pupils with SEND. Leaders need to find ways to make sure that the curriculum is accessible to all pupils. It is important that key knowledge is delivered clearly, so that pupils are able to remember more.

Governors have worked closely with external support partners from the diocese. Governors now receive important information from leaders at all levels. During the pandemic they continued to check leaders' work. Governors ask appropriately challenging questions of leaders and the well-being of all staff is a clear priority. Governors have supported leaders with staffing changes.

### **Additional support**

Covid-19 has affected the support the local authority and the diocese have been able to offer. Despite this, the diocese has continued to work remotely with both school leaders and governors. This has had a positive impact on leadership capacity and the strategic vision of those responsible for governance. Training provided by the diocese has helped governors to develop greater accountability. Leaders welcome this challenge.

Leaders have sought external support, including from national leaders of education and senior leaders in education partners. They have also joined a local partnership of small schools. Governors have worked with the diocese and colleagues from the Swaledale Partnership. School leaders and members of the governing body feel well supported by these external partners. All partners believe this has increased leadership capacity.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, members of the governing body, a representative of the diocese and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I listened to pupils reading with adults in school, visited lessons, scrutinised documentation, including school improvement and curriculum plans and checked responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for staff and parents.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Leeds, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Zoe Lightfoot  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**