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Kirstie Richards
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Dear Mrs Richards

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Pennington Church of England Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 10 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 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 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:

- ensure that the curriculum plans for all foundation subjects are clear about the key knowledge that pupils should learn and how that knowledge is strengthened over time

- train and support middle leaders so that they are expert in devising, implementing and evaluating the impact of the curriculum plans
- improve the teachers' subject knowledge and help all teachers become expert in the delivery of the curriculum.

Context

Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a new special educational needs coordinator.

Main findings

You have kept the improvement of the curriculum firmly at the centre of the school's work. The impact of COVID-19 has meant that some planned changes have been either slowed or delayed. Nonetheless, you have continued to make progress in the development of reading and mathematics. You and your staff have also focused well on pupils' behaviour. Staff understand that pupils' strong attitudes toward learning help them make better progress.

The reading strategy in the school is stronger than it was. You have invested heavily in training all teachers to teach phonics. This is principally to help younger pupils read more fluently. Older pupils also start their reading lessons with a phonics-based activity. This helps pupils' spelling. However, sometimes the activities go on for too long and pupils have less time to spend on more challenging work.

You are creating a culture of reading in the school. Pupils read regularly, both in class and independently. Younger readers who are not yet fluent are well supported in their reading. They make strong progress, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. By Year 6 even the weakest readers are able to read well.

The changes in mathematics are at an earlier stage but there is evidence of improved learning already. Staff have completed training which has improved the accuracy of their teaching. For example, inspectors saw a focused and clear approach to the teaching of fractions. The pupils were able to use the methods they had learned to calculate fractions. Most pupils were also able to confidently explain the method.

You and your leaders have put in place a curriculum plan that maps out the sequencing of all subjects in each year. You have put a great deal of thought into this. However, as yet, the plans do not fully identify how the knowledge in each subject builds over time. You have not considered carefully enough what the

learning in each subject is ultimately leading to. Teachers require additional training to help them deliver the foundation subjects successfully and consistently.

Governors have helped to bring about improvement by offering a strong balance of challenge and support. They are knowledgeable about the schools' strengths and weaknesses. However, a barrier to achieving further progress is whether there is sufficient expertise among leaders. Greater middle leader capacity is needed to bring about the required changes.

Additional support

The Solent Mathematics hub has worked with staff at the school to support them in their planning and delivery of mathematics. The training has been instrumental in helping teachers to teach mathematical concepts in a clear and consistent way. The local authority has supported the school through its local learning partner. However, during the inspection, it became clear that the school requires further specialised assistance to support the resource base unit. The local authority has pledged this immediate support for those pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, representatives of those responsible for governance, representatives of the local authority and the diocese to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I had discussions with pupils and staff, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. I considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 28 free text responses. I also took account of 16 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Yasmin Maskatiya
Her Majesty's Inspector