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Dear Mr Bishop

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Robert Bakewell Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 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:

- ensure that every subject plan sets out precisely what pupils should learn and when they should learn it
- implement a strategy to ensure that pupils remember, in the long term, the most important knowledge that they are taught in all subjects.

Context

Since the inspection in March 2019, five new governors and six teachers have been appointed. Nine teachers, some of whom had been employed on a part-time basis, have left the school.

Ofsted undertook a remote monitoring inspection of the school in February 2021. There have been no changes to staffing since that time.

While leaders have laid out their plans for improvement, the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic has impacted on some of these plans. This has meant that some training and actions have been temporarily delayed.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, leaders have taken steps to improve the curriculum. They consulted with parents, staff and pupils. They considered the needs and interests of the pupils who attend the school. Leaders are developing a curriculum that aims to be ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders have changed the arrangements for subject leadership. Subject leaders work in teams. Each team has oversight of a range of subjects. For example, 'Creativity and Expression' includes reading, writing, art and music. 'Innovation and Enterprise' includes science, mathematics, computing and design technology. Subject leaders have planned out when teachers will cover each part of the national curriculum.

However, subject plans are at different stages of development. All subject plans span the whole school from the early years through to Year 6. Some subjects, such as science, set out what pupils must learn and the order in which they should learn it. This includes the most important vocabulary that pupils must understand and remember. Not all subject plans are this precise.

Subject leaders have set out what they need to do to improve the curriculum in their subject. This information forms part of the school's overall plans for improvement. Leaders have started to create documents for teachers that provide support for their subject knowledge. Subject leaders have begun to check more

closely what is being taught in each class. Leaders are hopeful that, with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, staff will now be able to work more closely together. This will mean that they can sharply and swiftly develop their subject plans and check that their plans are implemented well.

At the start and end of each 'topic' of work, teachers talk to pupils about what they know and what they can remember. Pupils talk confidently about the different ways that teachers help them to remember what they have learned, such as times tables and spellings. However, leaders have not introduced a clear strategy to help pupils remember in the long term the most important knowledge, in subjects other than English and mathematics.

The teaching of reading is a high priority. Leaders have recently purchased new books for pupils to read. These books are matched to the sounds pupils are learning. Staff have received training in phonics, and this is taught daily. Teachers read to pupils regularly. Pupils' good attendance is rewarded by the headteacher coming to read to the class. Pupils told me that they enjoy this reward. They value the time the headteacher spends with them, sharing the books that he enjoys. Leaders plan to build a library as part of their drive to promote a love of reading. They have recently planned which novels each class will study. Over the course of their time at the school, pupils will study a range of different types of books.

Leaders have taken steps to improve the indoor environment of the school. Pupils say that their lessons are calm, and they are able to concentrate. Pupils move around school sensibly. In class, pupils pay attention to their teachers and get on with their work.

Following the inspection of March 2019, leaders took steps to involve parents more in the life of the school. Leaders introduced 'drop-in' sessions and coffee mornings. These were becoming established but have been stopped due to COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders hope to reintroduce these events in the future.

Governors have a clear understanding of the current priorities of the school. Like leaders, they know that while steps have been taken to improve the quality of education, there is still work to do. In common with all staff, they express a determination to ensure that the curriculum for all pupils, including those with SEND, is an ambitious one.

Additional support

Some leaders have undertaken national training in subject leadership. All subject leaders have received training from an external consultant in how to develop a curriculum. This has included leaders understanding published research into how pupils learn. These leaders have started to put this into practice as they rewrite the plans for their subjects.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, four subject leaders and seven other members of staff to discuss actions taken since the last inspection.

I held a meeting with two governors, one of whom is the chair of the governing body. I visited phonics lessons, and a range of other lessons, with the headteacher and I listened to three pupils reading to a familiar adult. I spoke with a group of six pupils about school life and their learning. I examined the single central record. Alongside the headteacher and deputy headteacher, I examined the school's curriculum plans, curriculum files and plans for improvement. I took account of the 77 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 38 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. I spoke by telephone with an external consultant who has been providing training for staff.

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

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan
Her Majesty's Inspector