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23 June 2021

Steven Rose  
Executive Headteacher  
Millbrook Primary School  
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Oxfordshire  
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Dear Mr Rose

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Millbrook Primary 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 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:

- implement their newly chosen phonics programme at the earliest opportunity and ensure that all staff are trained to teach it effectively
- focus on the implementation of the curriculum so that it is taught consistently well from early years to Year 6.

## **Context**

Since the previous section 5 inspection, there have been several new appointments to the board of trustees and the local governing body. A serving trustee took up the role of chair of trustees in October 2020.

## **Main findings**

You and your team are united in wanting to make Millbrook the best it can be. Together you are bringing about changes that are making a difference to pupils. Crucially, you have secured improvements to subject leadership and the curriculum. You have not let the pandemic slow down your actions to improve the school. The effective communication channels you have put in place since the previous inspection mean that parents recognise and understand the work you are doing. Parents are positive about the improvements that are happening.

You and your team have planned an ambitious curriculum. Subjects such as art, music, geography and computing are well sequenced with the knowledge and skills that pupils need to have. You are now working on developing your curriculum plans in history.

Staff are benefiting from the personalised coaching they receive from the trust. This is helping subject leaders better understand their roles and increase their subject knowledge. As a result, subject leaders are now front and centre in the school's work to improve the curriculum. You recognise that a greater focus is now needed on how staff consistently deliver the curriculum well across all year groups.

You have identified that changes are needed to improve the teaching of early reading. Currently, some staff lack the skills to support pupils who are falling behind. Assessment is not always accurate because some pupils do not read books that match the sounds they have learned. You have acted swiftly with strong support from the trust to address this. You are in the process of putting in place a new phonics programme which includes training for all staff. Nonetheless, you are determined that pupils develop a love of reading. Pupils are benefiting from a range of well-considered literature that covers interesting themes which enhance pupils' learning and vocabulary.

Staff are supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities well in lessons. They rehearse specific knowledge and vocabulary to help pupils' memory and understanding of what they will be learning in lessons. You have developed the pastoral support for pupils who may struggle to manage their emotions in class. Timely and purposeful sessions in the 'NEST' nurture space enable pupils to get swiftly back into class and continue with their learning. As a result, classrooms are calm places for pupils.

Trustees and governors are knowledgeable and reflective. They work effectively together. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They know the school's priorities and ask challenging questions to hold you and your team to account.

### **Additional support**

The trust is providing expert support to the school to improve the quality of education. Your subject leaders are valuing and benefiting from the work with other schools in the trust. You have also visited other trusts to seek out good practice and share expertise.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, the joint heads of school and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer of Vale Academy Trust, the trust's director for teaching and learning, staff, pupils, and representatives of those responsible for governance, including the chair of trustees and the chair of the local governing body, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated policies and documents, including the school improvement plan.

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 20 free-text responses. I also took account of 47 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Vale Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

James Broadbridge  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

