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Oriana Dalton and Lucy Roberts
Interim Headteachers
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Dear Mrs Dalton and Mrs Roberts

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Fenstanton and Hilton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 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 the new curriculum plans introduced by leaders include the important things that pupils need to know and that they are sequenced logically across lessons and across year groups

- ensure that teachers understand how to check what pupils have remembered and use the information to address gaps in pupils' knowledge
- continue to develop subject leaders' knowledge and skills so that they fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively.

Context

The recent partial closure of schools, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, has delayed some leaders' plans for the development of subjects across the curriculum.

Since the previous full inspection, there has been significant change in staffing. The headteacher and deputy headteacher left the school in August 2020. The local authority has brokered interim leadership from two experienced local leaders as well as a temporary deputy headteacher. A permanent deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2021. A new special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) was appointed at the start of the Summer term 2021. Several teachers have left the school, and these have been replaced with new staff.

Main findings

New leaders have acted swiftly to improve the quality of education. Leaders are working alongside teachers to provide support in planning lessons. This is having an effective impact upon pupils' learning. Staff are positive about the changes new leaders have made. They welcome the team approach you have introduced to plan the curriculum. They acknowledge the changes you have made and the benefits these are bringing to pupils' education.

On your arrival at the school, you recognised that the school's curriculum required change. Leaders introduced a new curriculum. This is to ensure that pupils study a broad range of subjects, which meet the requirements of the national curriculum. Leaders have ensured that curriculum plans identify what pupils need to know at the end of each year. However, many of the plans in the foundation subjects have not been fully developed. They do not identify the order in which this knowledge should be taught. The subject plans do not inform teachers how to plan lessons that build pupils' knowledge and understanding over time. Consequently, pupils do not have sufficient knowledge to build their understanding as they study each topic.

Some leaders are new to their role. Plans for their training have been delayed by the partial closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Curriculum leaders have contributed to developing subject overviews and provide some limited amounts of training to other staff. Senior leaders are creating curriculum teams to develop subject plans further. However, subject leaders do not yet have the

knowledge and skills of how to check whether teachers are delivering your plans effectively.

Teachers use of assessment is underdeveloped. Where teachers' subject knowledge is less well developed, they do not use questioning effectively to check what pupils have remembered. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are not being addressed with sufficient pace and rigour.

The teaching of early reading is a strength of the school. Your leaders ensure that all staff are well trained. Your leaders make regular checks of how well children and pupils are progressing with their knowledge of phonics. Additional support is provided for those pupils who fall behind so that they can catch-up quickly. The new approaches introduced for teaching reading to older pupils are quite recent. There has not been sufficient time for all teachers to develop the knowledge and skills to teach your plans effectively.

Following the previous inspection, governors carried out a review of their effectiveness. They have used the advice and support of the local authority well. The questions they ask are more probing and seek reasons for leaders' actions. Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge, so leaders are held to account.

Additional support

The local authority and the governing body has brokered the support of experienced senior leaders to help the school through this period of transition. The interim leadership arrangement is working successfully to address the issues identified from the previous inspection. The school improvement partner has supported leaders in the introduction of a rigorous monitoring cycle to check the quality of the school's work.

Additional support has been provided through the local authority's English and mathematics advisers. This is helping leaders to develop their plans and support teachers in their planning of a sequence of lessons.

Governors are accessing support and advice from a national leader of governance.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the interim headteachers, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and

a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I carried out visits to lessons, looked at documentation, including the school improvement plan and the self-evaluation document, and scrutinised documents and records relating to safeguarding. I reviewed 78 responses to the online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 21 free-text responses received since the additional monitoring inspection in March 2021. I considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Mellors
Her Majesty's Inspector