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Wendy Fowler
Headteacher
Milton Park Primary School
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Dear Mrs Fowler

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Milton Park 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:

- ensure that all subjects have a well-planned and sequenced knowledge-based curriculum.

Context

Since the previous section 5 inspection in 2019, four new members have joined the governing body.

Main findings

You and your staff are determined to raise the quality of education in the school. You have instilled a positive culture throughout the school. This is reflected in the calm and purposeful atmosphere in classrooms and the confidence that staff and parents have in the school's leadership. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are fully supportive of your vision for improving the school.

Your actions to improve how well pupils learn to read are proving successful. Staff have received extra training in phonics so that they now teach reading more consistently and effectively. Pupils now practise reading using books which contain the sounds they know. There is carefully targeted extra help for pupils who struggle with reading. You are also trialling a more systematic approach to developing pupils' love of reading across the school. This is working well. For example, pupils in Year 5 spoke confidently about the range of books they read, showing that there is now a culture of reading across the school.

You have made sure that staff have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve in English and mathematics. In these subjects, there is a more systematic approach to teaching the curriculum. For example, in mathematics all pupils now use the bar model method to solve mathematical problems. Leaders and staff now check regularly how well each pupil is learning. Teachers are getting better at identifying any gaps and adapting learning to suit pupils' specific needs. Extra help for vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is also more focused on supporting pupils' individual needs. As a result, pupils are learning more in these subjects.

Your work to improve the quality of learning in other subjects is not as far forward as you had initially intended. In part, this is because of the disruption caused by the pandemic. However, it is also because your strategic planning for improving the wider curriculum is not as sharply focused as it needs to be. This means that in some subjects, leaders and staff have not identified well enough the detailed knowledge that pupils need to learn. Consequently, in some subjects, pupils speak about the activities they can remember doing, rather than what they have learned about the subject.

Additional support

The school has benefited from a range of well-targeted support from the local authority and some external consultants. This includes help to improve reading and

mathematics. Your staff have also benefited from attending local subject development groups for some subjects. Wisely, you are currently applying for extra support which will focus on fine tuning the help you provide for pupils with SEND. I recommend that you access additional external support to focus on making sure that all subjects have a well-planned and sequenced knowledge-based curriculum.

Evidence

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

I visited lessons in English and mathematics and listened to some pupils read to an adult. I scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, curriculum plans and records of school-based monitoring conducted by the local authority. I considered the views of 37 parents and 38 staff members shared through the Ofsted surveys.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old
Her Majesty's Inspector