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23 June 2021

Jane Barnes
Headteacher
St Wulstan's and St Edmund's Catholic Primary School and Nursery
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Dear Mrs Barnes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Wulstan's and St Edmund's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 four 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:

- refine curriculum plans so that they contain the essential knowledge that pupils must learn and the order in which new knowledge should be taught

- ensure that governors have the knowledge and skills to check how effectively pupils are progressing through the school's curriculum.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a new assessment leader has been appointed. There have been two changes to the governing body. A new chair of governors took up post in November 2020. A new staff governor has also been appointed.

Main findings

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to continue to improve the reading curriculum. Since then, you have successfully embedded a new phonics and early reading programme. You have invested in resources to support the phonics programme. All pupils have books that match the sounds that they know. You have provided training and support for teaching staff so that the programme is delivered consistently across the classes. Any pupils who struggle to keep up with their reading receive timely and helpful support to help them catch up quickly.

In addition to the new phonics programme, you have restocked class libraries so that pupils have a wide choice of books. Pupils enjoy reading the books that they choose for themselves as well as listening to the stories their teachers read. You also expect pupils to read a book from your reading scheme. However, pupils said that they sometimes find it tricky to read all of these different books at the same time.

Since the previous inspection, you and your colleagues have taken further effective steps to review your curriculum plans. For example, you have ensured that these plans meet the requirements of the national curriculum. The subject leaders have benefited from a range of appropriate training and support in curriculum development. They now carry out routine checks to gain an insight into how well curriculum plans are being delivered by teachers. However, some of the curriculum plans do not set out in sufficient detail what pupils must know and remember. Added to this, some do not specify the order in which new knowledge must be taught. This means that some pupils do not remember the essential knowledge that they need for the next steps in their learning.

Governors have gained a better understanding of how to carry out many of their statutory responsibilities. They now have clearly defined responsibilities. That said, governors do not have a secure understanding of how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum.

You have made sure that your improvement plans prioritise the most pressing actions needed to secure rapid and sustained improvements. Despite the impact of the pandemic, you have continued with your planned actions to improve the school.

The parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's surveys were very positive about the improvements that you have made to the school. Staff understand and share your vision. The pupils that I spoke with told me that they look forward to coming to school, they enjoy spending time with their friends and they like learning.

Additional support

You have used the support from the local English hub to put the phonics and early reading programmes into place.

You said that regular meetings with local authority representatives have helped you to evaluate the effectiveness of your actions to improve the school. Governors have made the most of the training provided by the local authority and diocese to help them carry out their roles more effectively.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders, curriculum leaders, members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, representatives of the local authority and the Diocese of Lancaster to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I examined a variety of documentation, including your improvement plans and your curriculum plans. I checked the single central register of checks made on the suitability of adults to work in the school. I considered the 48 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 21 free-text comments, and the 23 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

I carried out a series of joint visits to classrooms to look at the curriculum in phonics and early reading with your phonics lead. I met with a representative group of staff and a group of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland
Her Majesty's Inspector