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23 June 2021

Jill Alexander-Steele  
Headteacher  
The Roebuck School  
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Dear Mrs Alexander-Steele

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Roebuck School**

Following my visit to your school on 26 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 three 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 provision for Nursery-age children more closely matches their learning and developmental needs.

## **Context**

Since the previous section 5 inspection, there have been significant changes to the school's staffing. You started as headteacher soon after that inspection. Nearly all teachers, including one of the assistant headteachers, have also joined the school since then.

The children in the Nursery class have moved into the main school building to join children in the Reception Year. There are now two mixed-age classes. You have also reorganised the other classes. There are single- and mixed-age classes throughout the school.

## **Main findings**

You and other leaders have successfully worked together to make significant improvements to the school. Pupils' behaviour is better than it was in the past. This allows pupils to properly concentrate on their learning. You have made sure that pupils and staff have developed a strong sense of pride in their school. I saw this clearly when pupils talked to me about their work. You and other staff have continued to redesign the school's curriculum so that this sets out what pupils need to know and remember. This is made more complicated because you have to cater for pupils in single- and mixed-age classes. You made the most recent changes to the curriculum at the start of this school year. You still have to finish checking that these changes are working as well as possible.

You have made sure that reading is at the centre of learning. Staff have received the training that they need to build their knowledge and confidence in teaching phonics. Leaders check that reading books link to pupils' phonics knowledge. Staff regularly change the books in the library. This helps pupils to stay interested in the books available. You have introduced a greater emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary so that they remember and use more interesting and complicated words.

The changes that you have made to the arrangements for Nursery-age children mean that they are now taught in the same classes as Reception-age children. While staff make some adjustments for the younger children, the curriculum and resources are generally better matched to the needs of the older children. This means that it is hard to be sure that Nursery-age children learn and develop as well as possible. Subject leaders have worked with the early years team to make sure that the early years curriculum better links into the curriculum in the rest of the school.

Governors have continued to work closely with a representative of the local authority, as well as you and other leaders, to make sure that improvement continues apace. They make sure they are well-informed about what is happening and hold you to account through their challenging questions. They have a sharp focus on the most important things.

The impact of COVID-19 has meant that you have had to focus on making learning safe and on pupils' well-being, as well as on improving the school. Inevitably, this has slowed some improvement. In addition, it has meant that you have had to reteach some pupils about your high expectations. The attendance of some pupils remains a concern. Staff are doing a great deal to challenge and support the families of pupils who are absent. You have worked hard with parents and carers so that everyone understands that if pupils are not in school, they are unable to benefit from the education you provide.

You have developed detailed plans that set out the aspects that leaders and staff need to improve. Leaders review these plans to make sure that improvement is happening as you expect. You trust leaders to take responsibility but keep a close eye on how improvement is progressing.

### **Additional support**

Support from the local authority has reduced considerably in line with the improvement that you have already secured. School leaders are now far more self-reliant. For example, they provide training for colleagues to support further development. A good example of this is your and other leaders' planning to ensure that staff are confident about the change in requirements for early years education.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you and other leaders to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I had online discussions with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, with a representative of the local authority, and with the school adviser, who is an independent education professional who provides advice and support to the school.

I completed a tour of the school, accompanied by you, and visited some lessons to see staff teaching phonics. I also visited the early years classrooms to see children during learning and play. I listened to pupils in Years 1 and 2 reading to an adult. I met with a group of pupils, including some in Years 2, 5 and 6.

I looked at documents, including your plans for improving the school. I reviewed 27 recent responses to Parent View, Ofsted's survey for parents, including 11 written comments, and 25 responses to Ofsted's inspection survey 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 Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

David Selby  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**