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Mr Vincent Murray
Headteacher
The Grange School
Wendover Way
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Dear Mr Murray

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Grange School

Following my visit to your school on 22 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 the assessment policy is consistently implemented across all subjects so that teachers understand what pupils know and remember before moving on to more complex learning.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a new deputy headteacher and one new assistant headteacher have been appointed. A new chair of governors and eight other governors have also joined.

Main findings

You and your team are making the necessary improvements to pupils' education. You are ambitious that pupils achieve their best and adamant that they adopt the school's motto of 'we can'. You have well-considered plans for improvement. The targets you have set yourself through the year have helped you and governors to monitor the changes you have put in place.

Pupils' behaviour has changed for the better. Their attitudes to learning in lessons are more positive. Pupils have responded well to the school's revised behaviour expectations. Teachers now expect pupils to behave well. The pupils that I spoke to explained that bullying was unusual in school and that pupils' behaviour around the school was generally sensible and calm. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of pupils who have been excluded for a fixed term has reduced dramatically.

You have begun to introduce well-considered changes to the school's assessment systems. However, these changes have not yet been fully embedded. Teachers do not consistently check what pupils understand and remember before moving on to teach more complicated or new knowledge. Furthermore, work is still not demanding enough in some subjects.

You are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and have made them a focus in your plans for improvement. The ways in which teachers adapt the curriculum are beginning to improve pupils' achievement. Teachers meet the needs of pupils with SEND increasingly well.

You have established approaches to improving pupils' attendance. There are signs that these are beginning to work. You are aware that there is still much more work to do in this area because the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school remains high. You explained that this has been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic and that your team had found it particularly difficult to encourage pupils in Year 11 to attend regularly after the most recent partial closure of the school.

Leaders decided that pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 would no longer be required to attend school after the summer half-term holiday because they had finished their examinations. You explained that you have provided resources for these pupils based around careers information, advice and guidance in order to prepare them for the next stages of their education, training or employment.

Staff are proud to work at The Grange School. They feel that leaders value them and support them well. A large majority of staff feel that the school has improved since the last inspection and they are motivated to improve the school further.

Governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They evaluate the improvements that are made and hold leaders to account well. Governance is being strengthened by training that is helping governors to sharpen their questioning of leaders.

Additional support

The local authority has brokered support from leaders in local schools. 'Pupil champions' and 'subject champions' from other schools have worked with leaders to improve the curriculum as part of the Buckinghamshire local authority project 'Side by Side'. Leaders have found this extra support useful in developing subject leaders' understanding of curriculum planning.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, staff, governors and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's improvement plan. I visited lessons with a senior leader to observe learning and met with a group of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Harry Ingham
Her Majesty's Inspector