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Mrs Theresa Alford
Headteacher
Field Place Infant School
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West Sussex
BN12 6EN

Dear Mrs Alford

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Field Place Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school 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:

- secure further improvements in behaviour by ensuring that the behaviour policy is clearly understood and implemented consistently by all staff.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a new key stage 1 leader, a new teacher in charge of the special resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and a new literacy lead have been appointed. There have been several changes to the governing body in the same period. The headteacher is retiring at the end of the summer term.

At the time of this inspection, the nursery was closed temporarily due to a positive case of Covid-19.

Main findings

You have maintained your determination to secure necessary improvements. You are updating school development plans to identify the right priorities, including implementation of the recently revised curriculum and further improvements in subject leadership.

You have redesigned this term's curriculum to take account of missed learning during the pandemic. This term's interim curriculum is suitably designed to equip pupils with the key subject knowledge they will need to learn successfully when the curriculum is fully re-established in the autumn term.

Teaching in subjects not covered entirely during the recent lockdown, such as computing, history and physical education (PE), has been reinstated, alongside teaching in reading, writing and mathematics. You have made effective use of the national curriculum to produce a clear and detailed plan of intended learning across the school. The plan provides a secure framework for teaching in all subjects from September 2021.

You continue to give reading a high priority. All staff are trained to teach phonics so that pupils benefit from a consistent approach. The school's stock of reading books has been updated to ensure that books are suitably matched to the phonics programme. You have taken appropriate steps to support pupils who have fallen behind in their reading during the recent lockdown. For example, a specialist reading teacher provides effective support for individual pupils, so that the pupils who work with her are soon back on track.

Staff report significant improvements in behaviour since the last inspection. While this may be so, there are still too many incidents of poor behaviour and significant variations in the way this is addressed. The school's behaviour management policy, while fit for purpose, is not understood and followed consistently by all staff. You have improved procedures for recording behaviour and safeguarding concerns since the additional monitoring inspection in March 2021.

You are beginning to re-establish activities to monitor the school's work as restrictions imposed due to the pandemic begin to ease, such as lesson visits and reviews of pupils' work. You have already noted some variations in curriculum delivery, including for pupils with SEND. Lesson visits during the inspection indicate that teachers are using leaders' feedback well to improve their classroom practice.

Subject leadership has improved since the previous inspection. External support provided before the pandemic helped subject leaders to develop a better understanding of their responsibilities. More recently, subject leaders have made a valuable contribution to redesigning the curriculum. However, there is more to be done in developing their roles in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. You have rightly identified this area of the school's work as a priority for improvement. You plan to reinstate training delayed by the pandemic as soon as practicable.

Governors' strategic oversight has strengthened. Governors are knowledgeable about recent developments in the curriculum and are clear about next steps needed. In recent weeks governors have understandably refocused their attention on leadership arrangements for September, following your decision to retire. The chair of the governing body's prompt action in contacting the local authority for advice means that arrangements are developing at pace. Governors are taking great care to consider the school's context when making decisions about its future. They are putting pupils' interests at the heart of their decision making.

Additional support

You and your governors value the clarity and rigour of support provided by the local authority. Discussions with the link adviser enable you to reflect and to articulate your thinking about different aspects of the school's work, such as the quality of the curriculum and the effectiveness of support for pupils with SEND, and to prioritise and plan improvements.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other members of the senior leadership team, representatives of the governing body, members of staff and two local authority representatives, in order to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also spoke with parents and pupils, visited a number of lessons, and observed pupils reading with an adult. I reviewed information on the school's website and considered a range of documentation provided by the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett
Her Majesty's Inspector