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Russell Tew
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Tew

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Leem Mills Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 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. 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:

- complete curriculum plans in all subjects and check that these plans are taught effectively so that pupils know and remember more.

Context

Since the previous inspection in June 2019, two new class teachers have been appointed and one teacher is currently on maternity leave. A new chair of governors was appointed in September 2020 and there have been two further new appointments to the governing body.

At the time of the inspection, all pupils were back in school. Pupils who had been learning remotely at the beginning of the spring term said that they enjoy being back in school with their friends and teachers. Where pupils have struggled to make the adjustment to face-to-face teaching, leaders have made sure that there are opportunities for these pupils to talk about their feelings and receive the help that they need.

Main findings

Leaders and those responsible for governance say that they want the very best for the pupils in their school. Leaders have identified the right priorities to improve the school and have worked tirelessly to make sure that these plans are actioned. Parents and staff are positive about the work the school has done to improve. Almost every parent who responded to the online questionnaire would recommend the school to another parent. All of the staff who completed the staff online questionnaire said that the school has improved since the previous inspection.

Staff well-being has been carefully considered by leaders. During the recent lockdown, leaders recognised how hard staff were working. As a result, they adjusted their plans for school improvement to ensure that staff did not feel overwhelmed. For example, providing remote education for pupils learning at home became the school's priority during the early spring term. This has meant that some of the school's work to improve has, understandably, been slowed. Now that the school is fully reopened, leaders are working at pace to ensure that the changes needed are implemented.

Pupils are taught a wide range of subjects. Curriculum plans for all of these subjects have been written. Many of these curriculum plans are now being reviewed to make sure that the knowledge pupils need is taught in the correct order. In a few subjects, there is still work to do to make sure that the correct knowledge has been identified. Opportunities for leaders to check that teachers are covering all of the curriculum, and that pupils know and remember more, have been hampered by the pandemic. Leaders know that these checks need to be made as soon as possible.

Improving provision for pupils in the early years has been a key priority for leaders. A new early years curriculum has been written. Expectations of what pupils can achieve

are now more ambitious. Activities provided for pupils are carefully planned using the newly developed curriculum alongside the pupils' interests. Assessment is used to identify which pupils require further challenge or support. Leaders have developed a learning environment where pupils can do better than they had previously. For example, during the inspection, pupils were fully absorbed in a writing task to design a wanted poster to catch the 'Evil Pea' as a part of their superhero topic.

There is a consistent approach to teaching the phonics curriculum. Staff have received recent training to make sure that they are using pure sounds when teaching phonics or reading with pupils. Teachers make regular and detailed checks to ensure that pupils are using their phonics to read and write. Pupils who need extra help are quickly identified. Pupils are given reading books that match the sounds that they already know. This means that they become confident readers who enjoy reading. Teachers read to pupils regularly. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the books they have read and love it when their teacher finishes story time on a cliff-hanger.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a strength of the school. Leaders in this area are experts. They provide effective support for staff to identify pupils who need extra help. They also know that sometimes pupils find it difficult to learn because they are worried or upset. When this happens, pupils visit 'The Treehouse' where they are listened to by a trusted adult and given strategies to deal with the things they find difficult to cope with in school, or at home. The school's leader for pupils with SEND works closely with external agencies to ensure that these pupils receive the additional help they need.

Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's priorities and what leaders are doing to address them. During the pandemic, they have continued to receive information about the school's improvement work and have imminent plans to complete their own visits to check how well the school is doing. Governors offer an appropriate balance of support and challenge. They are committed to improving their understanding of their roles and responsibilities as governors. They have engaged in a wide range of training to develop the knowledge and skills that they need to hold the school to account effectively.

Additional support

The local authority has provided leaders with helpful school improvement support. They have worked closely with the school to secure improvements in the early years and to the school's curriculum. They have challenged the school when needed and made sure that leaders have kept a sharp focus on the areas the school has identified as a priority.

Evidence

During the inspection, I spoke to the headteacher, deputy headteacher, three governors, including the chair of governors, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also held meetings

with the early years leader, three subject leaders, the leader with responsibility for pupils with SEND, two leaders with responsibility for nurture, and a small group of Year 5 pupils. I visited the early years and five phonics lessons. I listened to pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 reading with a familiar adult. I reviewed the school's development plan, looked at examples of reports from external support the school has received and examined minutes from meetings of the governing body. I looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including eight free-text responses, and 30 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Poole
Ofsted Inspector