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3 June 2021

Emma Bolton  
Headteacher  
Queen's Park Academy  
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Bedford  
Bedfordshire  
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Dear Mrs Bolton

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Queen's Park Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 5 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 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 not taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.**

The school should take further action to ensure that:

- new leaders take prompt and effective action to improve the quality of education and that they get the training and support they need to do this effectively
- trustees carry out their strategic role in holding leaders to account for the quality of education.

## **Context**

You took up your post as headteacher in September 2019. You worked with a human resources consultancy to reduce the number of staff working in the school because there were more staff in place than the school could afford. This has been a challenging period. COVID-19 delayed the completion of this work. As a result, the staffing restructure has taken longer to complete than you had planned. A new leadership team is now in place.

As a result of COVID-19, it is taking longer to see the difference that changes in the curriculum are making to enable pupils to achieve well.

## **Main findings**

Leaders' plans have not been focused on the actions they need to take to improve the school quickly and robustly.

Leaders recognise that there has been too little progress in improving the quality of education since the previous inspection. Leaders have not worked quickly enough to ensure that the curriculum is delivered strongly across all year groups, including in early years. Leaders who are new to their roles would benefit from training and support to enable them to carry out their roles effectively. They have not had the strategic support to enable them to improve the school quickly enough. Trustees do not have a clear understanding of the urgent need to improve the school.

You are beginning to move the school in the right direction. Leaders are working with teachers to improve the quality of education pupils are receiving. Leadership in early years is improving. Leaders now have higher expectations of what children in Reception Year can achieve. This has improved how well the curriculum is delivered.

Teachers have recently taken on the role of subject coordinators. They value the direction and guidance they are given by more experienced leaders as they learn what they need to do to carry out their roles. Coordinators are using their own subject knowledge to support the development of the curriculum. They are keen to inspire interest and enthusiasm from pupils in the different subjects they are learning about.

Leaders are bringing about changes to improve pupils' progress in reading. Staff are getting the guidance they need to enable them to teach phonics effectively. Staff are well trained to help weaker readers develop their reading fluency. They work with pupils to widen their vocabulary and deepen their understanding of what they are reading.

A new reading curriculum was introduced in September 2020 for pupils in key stage 2. Pupils now have more opportunities to practise reading in school. Teachers are introducing pupils to a wider range of texts, including texts that are more

challenging. This is at an early stage of implementation. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of the new reading curriculum on pupils' progress.

The curriculum for mathematics supports teachers in planning lessons that build on what pupils have learned before. Teachers are using assessments to identify the areas where pupils need to make up for learning they have missed during the pandemic. Work is under way to develop the wider curriculum. This is at different stages for various subjects. For example, plans for history and geography are further developed than those for music and art. Leaders are seeing improvements in the teaching of writing as a result of training and support they are giving staff. Trustees and leaders recognise that time is needed for the curriculum to make the positive difference to pupils' learning and achievement that leaders intend.

Trustees' monitoring focuses more on what leaders are doing, rather than on the impact of leaders' actions to improve the school. Trustees do not rigorously hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions to improve the quality of education for all pupils.

### **Additional support**

Leaders are preparing for the school to become part of a multi-academy trust. You have been working closely with leaders from the trust to refine the administrative functions within the school. As a result of this work, you are now able to focus more of your attention on improving the quality of education. You sought support from a human resources consultancy with regard to the staffing restructure. This ensured that the relevant processes have been followed.

Staff have received training and support from external providers to help them develop the curriculum. An external consultant visits the school each term to work with leaders and staff to support the delivery of the phonics programme. This is ensuring greater consistency in the teaching of phonics and early reading.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other leaders. I also met with trustees. These meetings were to discuss actions taken since the previous inspection. I visited lessons, accompanied by leaders, observed pupils reading, and looked at work in pupils' books. I considered a range of documentation, including the school development plan, minutes of trustees' meetings and reports, and the outcomes of monitoring activities. I reviewed the 29 responses from parents and carers that were submitted to Ofsted's Parent View, and 40 responses to the staff survey. I checked the single central register of the checks made when new staff are appointed.

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

Yours sincerely

Katherine Douglas  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**