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9 July 2021

Jilly Myers
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Dear Mrs Myers

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Liss Infant 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:

- redouble efforts to develop and implement plans in subjects other than English and mathematics from Reception onwards, ensuring that they identify and sequence carefully what pupils need to learn and remember
- accurately identify the intended impact of plans to improve the school.

Context

The school has continued to be affected by staff and leadership turbulence since the last full inspection in May 2019. One assistant headteacher left in December 2019 and another joined in January 2021. The early years leader has been absent since January 2021. A considerable number of staff, including the special educational needs coordinator, were on maternity leave at the time of this inspection. Two governors have left the governing body and have not been replaced.

Resourced provision for up to 10 pupils with moderate learning difficulties opened in January 2021.

Main findings

Your plans to improve the school have been disrupted by the pandemic and staffing issues. Despite these challenges, the actions that you and your team have taken are starting to bring about change. These developments are starting to impact positively on pupils' learning.

Since the previous inspection, you have strengthened the teaching of reading. Staff have been trained and you have invested in new books so that when pupils read, they practise the sounds that they are learning. All pupils are taught phonics daily. Staff use the expert knowledge they have developed to support pupils well when listening to them read or supporting any who are falling behind. You have recently introduced extra reading lessons which are improving pupils' understanding of the texts they are reading.

You and your staff have made improvements to English and mathematics planning from Reception to Year 2. This is helping to guide teachers to sequence the learning so that pupils build on what they have learned before, and are prepared for subsequent learning. This is beginning to support pupils to know and remember more. Some staff are familiar with the plans and have strong subject knowledge. This helps them present information clearly and check pupils' understanding accurately. However, this is not yet consistent in all classrooms.

Your work in other subjects is at an earlier stage. Plans are now in place for all subjects. However, subject leaders have not yet precisely identified and sequenced the knowledge pupils need to learn. They have not ensured that plans build on what pupils learn in the Reception Year.

You and your team routinely review how swiftly the school is developing and what the most important actions are to secure further improvements. However, it is not always clear in plans exactly what you intend to achieve. You agree that identifying more clearly what you plan to achieve will help you, and governors, more accurately review progress towards the school becoming good.

The pandemic interrupted governors' planned visits to school but these have now resumed. Governors have reviewed how to use visits to assure themselves that what leaders are telling them is accurate. They have organised training to support them to challenge leaders more knowledgeably about the curriculum.

Additional support

The school has valued and made effective use of support from the local authority with English and mathematics planning and with early years provision. Subject leaders have also made use of support from local mathematics and English hubs to further support with planning and to strengthen phonics.

The governing body has sought advice from the local authority to support how to best use school visits to help review progress towards becoming a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons, listened to pupils read, examined the school's improvement plan and internal and external monitoring reports. I looked at 45 responses, including 24 free-text comments, to the parent questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. I also looked at eight staff survey responses.

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

Yours sincerely

Laurie Anderson
Her Majesty's Inspector