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Paul Bowlas
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Dear Mr Bowlas

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Trinity CofE Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 a consistent approach to how staff apply and deliver phonics knowledge to the whole class, to small groups and when reading with individual pupils
- further develop the wider curriculum so that all subjects are clearly planned and sequenced to enable pupils to build their knowledge over time.

Context

Throughout the pandemic, you continued with your plans for school improvement. Plans for monitoring the effectiveness of the curriculum, however, were hampered due to COVID-19. Initially, partial school closures interrupted planned opportunities to model good practice in teaching phonics and the wider curriculum. However, this work did continue remotely. Now that all pupils are back in school, you and your leaders are able to continue this work in the classroom.

There have been significant changes in staffing since the previous inspection in April 2019. More than 20 members of staff are new to the school since its last inspection. Some of these are new appointments to the federation and others have been redeployed from the junior school. In addition, there have been new appointments to the governing body, including governors with expertise both in finance and human resources.

Main findings

There has been a determination to strengthen leadership since your last inspection. The well-being of staff and of your wider school community is a priority to you. Your passion for ensuring ambitious and well-rounded outcomes for all Holy Trinity children is clear.

Leaders have completed much work to develop a better understanding of early reading. The newly introduced phonics programme is planned and delivered effectively in Nursery. Staff in this area of school model sounds clearly and accurately. However, in Reception and key stage 1, staff do not always model consistent methods to help pupils learn to read. The books that pupils use to practise reading are not always matched to their phonics knowledge. Staff encourage pupils to revert to unhelpful strategies, such as guessing from the picture, when they come across words containing sounds they are not familiar with.

It was a pleasure talking to your friendly and welcoming pupils. You have ensured that personal development is threaded through many activities in school. This has had a positive impact on pupils' well-being. Pupils are lively, inquisitive and self-assured. They talk with confidence about their school. However, when discussing their learning, pupils are less able to talk about how teachers help them to know and remember more.

Leaders have taken action to improve the quality of the school's curriculum. Some subject leaders are now able to show significant understanding of the subject area they are responsible for and of how they can support children in knowing and remembering more. In other subjects, the specific components of knowledge, and how these are planned, is less clear. You are prioritising this work so that all subject leaders understand the most important knowledge and vocabulary pupils need to learn from the early years onwards.

In Nursery, activities and areas of provision are carefully considered to ensure that children are developing successfully in all areas of learning. As a result, children are well prepared to move to Reception. Nursery children are happy and safe. They cooperate and play well together. When learning independently, children show an eagerness to take part in different activities and a deep concentration when they do.

Additional support

You have sought extensive staff professional development since your last inspection and worked hard to maintain access to training when school was partially closed due to COVID-19. These development opportunities have been considered and purposeful. You thought carefully about your priorities as school leaders, about the development of members of staff and about the needs of pupils.

The senior leadership team is part of the Nuffield Early Language Intervention and you have developed a relationship with the Leeds Beckett University speech and language therapy (SALT) department. These initiatives support the language development of pupils. Subject leaders have accessed national professional qualifications in middle and senior leadership. The school is working with the local mathematics and English hubs. The local authority has also supported governors with training in both finance and human resources. You have planned further curriculum development opportunities with the diocese to support subject leaders who are new to their role.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, members of the governing body, a representative from the diocese and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I listened to pupils read with familiar adults, visited lessons, scrutinised documentation, including school improvement and curriculum plans, and checked responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for staff and parents.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Church of England Diocese of Leeds, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Zoe Lightfoot
Her Majesty's Inspector