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Sarah Shaughnessy
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Dear Mrs Shaughnessy

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Meridian Angel Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 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 that a consistent approach to teaching phonics is in place, supported by staff training that focuses on developing pupils' fluency in reading
- ensure that the work done in mathematics, history, geography and physical education (PE) to provide a well-ordered curriculum adapted to the needs of the school, is mirrored across other curriculum subjects, including in music, languages, design and technology, and art
- ensure that teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) has a central focus on the essential subject knowledge to be taught to and learned by pupils.

Context

All members of the senior leadership team have been appointed since the section 5 inspection in November 2019. You joined the school in January 2020. The deputy headteacher was appointed from within the school in September 2020, when the assistant headteacher also joined the school. The lead practitioner for mathematics took up post in November 2020.

On the day of my visit, the entire Reception class and staff were self-isolating.

Main findings

Since taking up appointment, you have built a new leadership team and have taken some decisive action. You have accurately identified that the quality of education still needs to improve at Meridian Angel. Further staff changes are imminent, with a number of new appointments made for September 2021.

Books given to the youngest and weakest readers match the sounds that they know. This is an improvement. Pupils are able to decode and blend sounds without prompting, but their fluency remains underdeveloped. For example, when blended words reoccur, they do not remember their previous attempts.

The new assistant headteacher has done much to bring about consistency in the planning of phonics teaching and identify where additional help for pupils is needed. However, the school continues to draw on a number of phonics schemes and approaches. This is confusing for staff and pupils. The final step in adopting a single, consistent phonics approach across the school is planned for September 2021. We agreed that training staff to deliver this approach, including the development of pupils' fluency in reading, is vital.

In the wider curriculum, leaders have rightly prioritised having clear and robust schemes of work in place for all subjects. All national curriculum subjects have a plan in place. In mathematics, history, geography and PE, commercial schemes of work have been bought in. These have been adapted to suit the school. They set

out well-ordered expectations for the knowledge pupils need to learn. In music, while commercial resources have been purchased, not enough thought has been given to how these promote pupils' musical progression. The school has been offering Bulgarian as a language throughout key stage 2, to reflect the school's local community. However, leaders have decided that Spanish will be offered from September 2021 instead. This is to enable teachers' access to a wider range of curriculum resources, and is intended to better prepare pupils for language study in secondary school. Plans are in place to review schemes of work in other subjects such as design and technology, and art, in the coming autumn term.

In your self-evaluation, you clearly understand that the quality of education is not just about having curriculum plans in place. Discussions with leaders revealed that, while CPD is provided for staff, it focuses as much on generic teaching strategies as it does on building teachers' subject knowledge. Scrutiny of pupils' work in books suggests that time is used for activities such as colouring in and sticking in pictures, that could be better spent on learning and remembering key knowledge. We agreed that implementing curriculum plans more effectively, through stronger subject teaching, is crucial to the school's further improvement.

Additional support

Leaders and governors have not been shy in seeking support from a variety of sources, including the trust and two neighbouring local authorities. This support has been particularly helpful in developing the curriculum, and in steering school improvement while dealing with other challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the leading practitioner. I also met with the chair of governors, and a representative from the London Diocesan Board for Schools Academies Trust (LDBS LAT) who is supporting the school. These meetings were to discuss actions taken since the last inspection. Additionally, I observed Year 1 pupils reading, scrutinised school improvement plans and leaders' self-evaluation, reviewed curriculum planning documents and sampled pupils' books from Years 4, 5 and 6. I considered the views of parents and staff through Ofsted's surveys.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the LDBS LAT, the director of education for the Diocese of London, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Enfield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector