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Debbie Brown
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Dear Miss Brown

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Newlands Community Primary 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 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:

- ensure that subject leaders complete the work they have started by developing curriculum plans that set out precisely the knowledge that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), must learn and the order in which they should learn it

- provide staff in all year groups with training in the school's phonics programme, check that the agreed approach to teaching phonics is consistently delivered and ensure that those pupils who struggle to read receive effective teaching to help them to catch up
- ensure that subject leaders have the necessary knowledge and skills to make sure that the school's curriculum is taught consistently well.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to the school. The headteacher left the school in April 2021. The deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher are currently leading the school with the local authority's support. A new chair of the governing body and a new governor have been appointed. Four teachers have been appointed and will start in the Autumn term 2021. Leaders have dealt with significant staff absences.

COVID-19 has significantly affected attendance. On the day of the inspection, one 'bubble' of year 3 pupils was closed, and pupils were sent home to isolate.

More recently, leaders have accelerated their actions to improve the school. The pandemic has not affected the urgency with which leaders have acted to improve the provision.

Main findings

Leaders have taken significant steps to improve the teaching pupils receive. However, there are still inconsistencies, which mean that some pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders have provided training to help teachers improve their teaching.

Leaders are reviewing the school's curriculum to make sure that it meets the needs of all pupils. Leaders are checking that all subjects include the knowledge they want pupils to know. Some subject curriculums, such as science, are more developed. Senior leaders know that subject leaders need further training to develop their expertise and leadership skills to develop the curriculum and check on its delivery. Leaders have plans in place to provide this training. Some training has been delayed due to COVID-19. Some subject leaders have been unable to make checks on their subject areas because of the safety restrictions the pandemic has created. This has slowed development of the curriculum in some subjects.

Leaders continue to prioritise reading. They have changed the phonics programme to make sure that pupils can learn all the knowledge they need to sound out and read words. Teachers regularly check the sounds that pupils have remembered. Pupils with SEND receive extra help with their reading and phonics. They have

ensured that reading books in the early years, and Years 1 and 2 are well matched to pupils' needs.

The teaching of phonics in the early years is a strength. However, in other year groups there is inconsistency in the teaching of early reading. Some staff do not have the knowledge they need to be able to teach phonics well. Some pupils who need extra help with their reading do not learn to read quickly enough. Leaders have not ensured that pupils who are the furthest behind in learning to read receive the most effective teaching to help them to catch up with their reading.

The school's SEND coordinator is helping teachers understand how they can best support pupils with SEND. Leaders are beginning to check that pupils with SEND are getting the right support in lessons. However, they have not yet considered how to adapt curriculum plans to support SEND pupils in different subjects.

Governance has improved significantly since the last inspection. Governors have ensured that they have had appropriate training to help them to challenge leaders. They understand the school's priorities. Governors make sure that leaders are now improving the school rapidly. Governors understand the need to make careful checks as the reviewed curriculum is implemented, particularly in mathematics. They know that subject leaders will need support to fulfil their roles effectively. They also understand that recruiting a new headteacher is a priority.

Plans for improvement show the actions for the school to become good. Leaders have recently adapted these plans to include support for disadvantaged pupils. Governors are using these plans to check the leaders' work.

Additional support

More recently, leaders have used support from the local authority to bring about swift improvements. This support has included improving teachers' quality of questioning and teaching and providing support for subject leaders, particularly for English and mathematics.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior and subject leaders, pupils, staff, governors and representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited mathematics and phonics lessons. I observed pupils reading to a member of staff. I reviewed 62 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 58 free-text responses and 18 staff survey responses. I reviewed the school's improvement plans, curriculum plans, minutes of governors' meetings and reports from the local authority. I reviewed the single central record.

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

Yours sincerely

Shaheen Hussain
Seconded Inspector of Schools