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8 July 2021

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Dear Mrs Gadd

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Beacon Academy

Following my visit to your school on 17 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 three 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:

- continue to refine curriculum plans for foundation subjects so that teachers understand the specific knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember in each subject
- ensure that all subject curriculum plans identify how knowledge builds from the early years to the end of Year 6.

Context

Leaders have continued their work to improve the school. The pandemic has had a negative impact on the implementation and speed of some of their actions. Two year-group 'bubbles' of pupils and five members of staff were isolating at the time of the inspection. The rapidity and effectiveness of leaders' actions have increased since March 2021.

Main findings

Leaders are taking the necessary steps to improve the school. They have reviewed the implementation of the curriculum. They are identifying the knowledge they want pupils to learn by the time they leave the school. Plans are in place to teach subjects discretely from September 2021. Leaders consider that this approach will support pupils to remember more and make connections in their learning.

The sequencing of knowledge in foundation subjects is improving. The trust supports the school with the provision of planning for some subjects. Leaders responsible for the curriculum are adapting these plans to meet the needs of Beacon Academy pupils. Some foundation subjects are now planned so that knowledge builds logically from Year 1 to Year 6. But some subjects are still in development. Leaders are aware that there is further work to do. Not all teachers are clear about the important knowledge they want pupils to know.

Leaders of the Nursery and Reception classes work together well. They plan the early years curriculum to meet the individual needs of children. The new outdoor classroom area is a valuable addition to the early years provision. Children have extensive opportunities to develop and practise their knowledge and skills. The Nursery and Reception class leaders work with subject leaders to improve whole-school curriculum planning. However, subject plans do not detail how knowledge is taught from the early years.

The school promotes reading well. Staff and pupils read together often. Phonics teaching starts in the Nursery Year. Staff check the sounds that pupils know and remember. Pupils who struggle to read get the help they need to catch up. They receive prompt support and extra teaching. Leaders are working to ensure that the teaching of phonics is consistent across the school.

Despite the pandemic, leaders' actions to improve the attendance of pupils are effective. Leaders keep a sharp focus on promoting the importance of good attendance. They work actively with families and external professionals to support pupils. Persistent absence of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is reducing.

Additional support

The trust provides challenge and support to senior leaders. It ensures that leaders focus on necessary improvements. The trust has strengthened the leadership of the school. It supports staff with developments with the curriculum. Governors and trustees work closely together. They have supported leaders at all levels to increase the pace of improvements. They check that the impact of leaders' actions, including those for improving attendance, are having the desired impact.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, executive headteacher, four middle leaders, pupils, the human resources officer for the trust, the chair of the governing body and a national director of secondary schools for the trust, who is currently overseeing the trust's primary academies, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I also visited lessons with leaders, listened to pupils read and reviewed a range of documents, including some of the school's curriculum plans. I looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including seven free-text responses, and 34 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Innes-Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector