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13 July 2021

Lee Ferriday
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Dear Mr Ferriday

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Queenswood Primary School and Nursery

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 judgements of requires improvement at the previous section 5 inspections.

This was the first routine monitoring inspection carried out by Ofsted 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 not taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- provide staff with better support to ensure that revised curriculum plans are implemented effectively

- ensure that teachers check on pupils' learning and address any misconceptions quickly
- develop the school's approach to supporting pupils' speech, language and communication development
- ensure that all staff model and expect the highest standards of speech, presentation and handwriting, in line with the school's writing and other policies
- ensure governors work closely with the local authority, with urgency, to secure stable leadership for the school to bring about the necessary improvements rapidly.

Context

COVID-19 had a significant impact on the school and its plans for improvement. Leaders have been unable to focus as much attention on some aspects of curriculum development. Some pupils lost an additional two weeks of learning due to a recent outbreak of coronavirus.

Since the last section 5 inspection when the school was judged to require improvement, the number of teaching assistants has been reduced and a new teacher has joined the Year 5/6 class.

Main findings

The progress the school has made since the last full inspection has been slow. Progress has been hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, but in addition to this, turbulence in leadership has also contributed to delayed improvement.

When the school was closed to all but the most vulnerable pupils, staff provided pastoral support and equipment to help pupils continue learning remotely. Despite this, pupils returned to school in April 2021 with significant gaps in their learning. This was particularly the case in relation to number bonds and times tables in mathematics, and sentence structure and spelling in English. For the first few weeks after returning, teachers focused on helping pupils to settle back into the routine of school. Pupils needed reassurance that it was normal to feel nervous after spending so long away from their friends. You have provided catch-up sessions for those pupils who need it.

You have prioritised reading. Pupils are enthusiastic readers. In key stage 1 and the early years, pupils have daily phonics sessions in line with the school's chosen phonics scheme. Pupils have reading books matched to the letters and sounds they are learning. All staff have received training to deliver phonics sessions. However, some staff do not check what pupils can do throughout the sessions to identify

which letter sounds pupils need to practise. This means that some pupils do not keep up with the rest of the class.

In lessons, pupils are engaged in their learning. They enjoy learning about historical periods, such as the Iron Age and the Romans. The new curriculum plans for history clearly show what pupils are expected to know, understand and remember. They include concepts such as chronology, settlement, conflict and change. Pupils talk confidently about the impact of significant historical events on life in Britain.

In subjects other than history, geography, science, English and mathematics, curriculum plans are yet to be reviewed. You have scheduled a small number of subject curriculum plans to be revised each term. Following the model established in history, teachers will be expected to research and devise curriculum plans, then provide training for staff. Key assessment questions help teachers to assess pupils' knowledge.

In lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are not always clear. Their questions do not consistently enable pupils to articulate their understanding. Work in pupils' books is too often poorly presented. Despite signs of improvement prior to the pandemic, the standard of pupils' work has dipped since pupils returned to school. You have not ensured that all staff model the high standards in speaking, writing and presentation that you expect from pupils.

Attendance has improved across the school because you have prioritised support for pupils and families who need it. The newly appointed family support worker has quickly formed positive relationships with parents. She works hard to remove barriers to attendance by providing practical support when it is needed. Most pupils who previously had high levels of absence are now attending more regularly.

Leaders have refreshed the school values so that they are more closely matched to the fundamental British values of democracy, tolerance and the rule of law. Pupils can explain how these values underpin modern life in Britain. They make links confidently to significant historical events and current affairs, such as the recent Black Lives Matter protests, which reflect the values in action. During the pandemic, pupils have not been able to visit local historical sites or places of worship. However, teachers arranged virtual visits where possible, to ensure that pupils continued to enjoy cultural, historical and spiritual experiences. Year 3 and 4 pupils recently enjoyed climbing to the top of the Wrekin to visit an iron age fort.

In the early years, leaders have improved the outdoor area. This is now a more engaging place for children to learn. However, interactions between adults and children are too often adult-led. Staff do not plan carefully enough the opportunities for children to talk, express themselves and develop their vocabulary. Frequently, teachers ask questions but do not give children enough time to respond – they answer for them. Consequently, children still do not develop their speech, language and communication skills as effectively as they should.

Leaders have appropriate plans for improvement in place. You provide regular reports to the governing body, detailing the progress the school is making. While the pace of positive change has recently increased under your leadership, not enough has been done to address the weaknesses since the school was judged to require improvement. Governors have not done enough to secure stable leadership for the school. This has been a barrier to the school's progress towards becoming a good school.

Additional support

The local authority's monitoring and evaluation meetings regularly review the school's progress. Local authority officers agree that the pace of improvement needs to increase and that teachers would benefit from additional external support to improve the quality of education further. Governors and local authority officers have not reached agreement on the future for the school. This situation has further hampered the progress the school has made.

You value the support provided by the local authority from a teaching school alliance, which has helped you to bring about the improvements seen so far in the curriculum. Subject leaders are receiving support to develop curriculum plans and to develop their own subject knowledge so that they can support other staff. This recent development is starting to bear fruit.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, pupils, the family support worker, governors, the school's independent adviser and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I visited lessons with you and met with you and other leaders to discuss the curriculum and attendance. I heard pupils reading and reviewed pupils' books during lessons.

Prior to the inspection, I read the previous inspection reports and the school's self-evaluation, as well as reviewing documents on the school's website.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Spilsbury
Her Majesty's Inspector