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Dear Mrs George

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Peter's CofE (A) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 July 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 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. 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.

Context

There have been significant staff changes since the previous section 5 inspection. The senior leadership team has reduced in size from four to three leaders. There is no longer a deputy headteacher. The senior leader and a curriculum leader left in

August 2020. The headteacher now leads mathematics. A new teacher started in September 2020.

Four governors have left the governing body and four new governors have joined since the previous section 5 inspection.

The number of classes in key stage 2 were reduced from four to three in September 2020. Key stage 2 classes are now mixed age.

Main findings

Leaders have maintained their focus on improving the school. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities. However, changes in staffing, along with disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, have delayed some work to improve the curriculum. Leaders recognise this. They are taking the necessary steps to improve the school but know there is still more to do.

Leaders' action plans identify the right priorities for moving the school forward. These plans are specific about how leaders intend to develop the curriculum further. Leaders review the success of their plans on a regular basis. As a result, they have an accurate view of the schools' strengths and weaknesses.

Leaders have worked hard to develop the effectiveness of middle leaders. Curriculum leaders' work with a local authority adviser has helped them gain a clearer understanding of their roles. For example, they have written 'excellence criteria' that clearly set out the key tasks that they perform. Consequently, middle leaders have a better understanding of how to monitor the quality of education in the subjects that they lead. In addition, they have gained confidence to coach and support other staff.

Staff are positive about the changes that leaders are making. They can see that these changes are starting to have a positive impact. Staff told us that they feel well supported by leaders. They are proud to work at the school.

At the previous section 5 inspection, you were asked to address gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge. You acted quickly and made significant changes to the design of the mathematics curriculum. Leaders adopted new curriculum plans that build content year by year. They also provided a programme of training for staff. This training has helped staff understand how to teach mathematics well. Teachers now ensure that pupils re-visit and practise key ideas often. This is helping pupils to become better mathematicians. Teachers have made checks on what pupils know, since all pupils returned to school on 8 March 2021. These checks have shown leaders that some pupils do not remember the essential mathematical knowledge they need to make progress. Leaders have acted swiftly and given these pupils extra support. For example, many pupils in key stage 2 now benefit from extra

mathematics lessons after school. In addition, leaders have placed more emphasis on pupils practising mathematics in their homework.

Leaders place high priority on ensuring that all pupils learn to read well. The school's approach to teaching phonics is coherently planned and structured. Teachers regularly assess pupils' phonics knowledge and ensure that the books pupils read are well matched to their abilities. Leaders expect staff to promote a love of reading to all pupils. They have, for instance, carefully chosen a broad range of authors and stories for teachers to read to their classes. Pupils remember these stories and talk about them with enthusiasm.

Leaders have ensured that curriculum plans set out the content pupils are expected to learn in foundation subjects. These plans are clear about the specific knowledge, skills and vocabulary that you expect pupils to know year by year. However, staff expertise in teaching some content is still developing. Some subjects, such as French, have not been covered consistently during the pandemic. Leaders know this and have plans in place to continue improving the quality of education in foundation subjects.

Leaders recognise that pupils' experiences have been limited during the pandemic. Because of this, leaders have worked to quickly reinstate learning opportunities that extend beyond the academic curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 6 have been on a residential trip. Some pupils have taken part in after-school sports clubs. Pupils were excited about their role in voting for the new head girl and head boy at the time of this inspection. Pupils told us that they appreciate being able to take part in these activities again.

Governors have a broad range of experience and talent. They are clear about their roles and have high expectations for the school. Individual governors focus on specific areas of school improvement every half term. They have continued to communicate regularly with school leaders throughout the pandemic. This, along with detailed reports from the headteacher, has helped the governing body to hold leaders to account.

Additional support

The local authority makes regular checks on the actions that leaders are taking to improve the quality of education. You welcome this support. Work with other school improvement partners, including a local mathematics hub, has had a positive impact on leaders' actions to improve mathematics and English. For example, leaders have been able to access training for staff. This training has helped to build staff confidence in teaching mathematics and English.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, curriculum leaders and pupils. I also discussed the actions taken since the last inspection with representatives of those responsible for governance, and a representative of the local authority.

I evaluated the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. I reviewed minutes of governors' meetings. I looked at curriculum plans alongside pupils' workbooks. I also visited lessons with the headteacher. In addition, I reviewed responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text responses, and 11 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Leonard
Her Majesty's Inspector