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Sarah Sindrey
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Dear Mrs Sindrey

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Moorhill Primary School

Following my visit with Helen Forrest, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 29 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 long-term planning for foundation subjects so it is clear what subject knowledge should be taught in each sequence of lessons for that subject and how that knowledge is built up over time.

Context

The national lockdowns limited the number of pupils who attended the school, but you provided all pupils with online remote learning or support through hand-delivered work packages.

A new chair of governors took up post in September 2020.

Main findings

You are committed to all pupils achieving the best possible outcomes, along with skilled governors and a dynamic leadership team. The actions that you are taking are addressing the areas identified at the last inspection. While the school's capacity to implement school improvement slowed during the pandemic, you feel that the periods of national lockdown provided leaders with some opportunities to develop the whole school curriculum further and approaches to behaviour. Consequently, the curriculum is starting to help pupils learn more and remember more in English and mathematics. The long-term plans for foundation subjects are not yet as effective in promoting learning and remembering more. You have also been mindful that the pandemic has brought additional challenges, for example where pupils have missed vital curriculum content during national lockdowns, and have adapted plans accordingly.

You have rightly focused on ensuring that all pupils are confident readers. Subject leaders are committed to developing independent readers who can infer, question, and deduce information from books. Recently, plans for older pupils have been enhanced and provide teachers with the precise steps that pupils need to acquire these advanced reading skills quickly. The subject leaders have ensured that all pupils experience an extensive range of genres, authors and styles of texts.

The quality of pupils' writing continues to improve. Pupils have lots of opportunities to write, and their writing is getting better. Writing skills are prioritised at an early age so that as the pupils get older, they can use those skills to write in a range of different styles and for different audiences.

Mathematics is a strength. Both subject knowledge and key skills are defined clearly in curriculum planning. This means that teachers know precisely what they should teach to build on prior learning and prepare for the next steps. These long-term plans prepared the school well for the gaps in pupils' learning caused by changes to the curriculum during the national lockdowns. The mathematics leader, working closely with teachers, adapted existing sequences of lessons to prioritise what pupils needed to know to catch up quickly.

You continue to prioritise the development of science and all foundation subjects such as computing and art. You have provided opportunities for subject leaders and class teachers to work together to plan sequences of lessons, to help them develop

their subject expertise. However, while subject leaders have identified what key skills they expect pupils to learn in science and foundation subjects, it is unclear what specific subject knowledge they want pupils to learn. For example, in art and design, current plans say that pupils will know 'about the works of Claude Monet and William Turner', but it is not clear what this knowledge about the works is or how it will be developed over time. Consequently, some pupils cannot always recall what they have learned about the subject in previous lessons. Further defining this subject knowledge will ensure that all teachers, and pupils, know what knowledge and learning experiences they are building on and preparing for.

Since the last inspection, and through periods when the school was only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions, you have seized every opportunity to enhance systems for managing behaviour at the school. The simple rules of 'ready, respectful and safe' are understood by all. All staff members have now received training on the school's approach, which is regularly 'topped up' by in-house specialists. As a result, behaviour is generally more positive. However, leaders know that occasionally behaviour can be more challenging, and you have therefore developed a range of interventions, such as mentoring to support individual pupils. When exclusions have happened, they are carefully managed, and pupils are supported appropriately. Your use of short-term alternative provision for a small number of pupils complements this bespoke approach by providing the right support at the right time. You are now refining your written behaviour policy so it includes this broad range of support strategies for pupils.

Attendance is exceptionally well managed. Consequently, absence is reducing over time. Before the periods when the school was only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions, the number who were persistently absent had begun to decline. Since the school opened fully to all pupils on 8 March, you have re-established the high expectations for attendance. In addition, a recently appointed attendance support officer has further enhanced your commitment to making sure parents get the support they need to overcome the barriers to their children attending regularly. You are currently in the process of working with the local authority to challenge and take action for those parents who, despite this support, do not consistently ensure their children attend school.

Additional support

You have worked closely with the local authority and have sought support from external partners. Leaders have taken a key role in identifying what support the school needed and what form this should take. For example, support has focused on developing subject leadership or consistency in behaviour management. As a result of this support, subject leaders are now more confident in monitoring how the curriculum is taught. Equally, staff are more consistent in managing poor behaviour and promoting positive learning behaviours.

Evidence

During the inspection, we held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and the school improvement partner to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Meetings with governors and the school improvement partner were completed remotely.

We also visited lessons and reviewed the quality of work in pupils' books. In addition, we evaluated survey responses from staff and parents. As part of the inspection, we also visited two alternative providers where pupils from the school are currently attending.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Pollitt
Her Majesty's Inspector