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Sue Birch
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Dear Mrs Birch

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Birk Hill Infant & Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 22 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 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:

- ensure that the curriculum plans for the early years and all subjects identify the important knowledge that pupils need to know
- ensure that the curriculum is successfully adapted so that it meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and helps them to develop their knowledge and skills
- ensure that the school's assessment system helps teachers to check pupils' understanding and address any gaps which have emerged in their learning.

Context

There have been significant changes to leadership since the previous inspection. A key stage 1 leader and a leader responsible for mathematics were appointed in September 2020. The special educational needs coordinator joined the school in January 2020. Four governors have resigned. Two governors have been appointed.

Main findings

Leaders are not complacent and are improving the school. They seek support from the local authority and use research to improve the curriculum. In some subjects, leaders identify the knowledge that they want pupils to learn. For example, in history, leaders set out key vocabulary such as rescue, storm, lighthouse and shipwreck when pupils learn about Grace Darling. Plans make clear what pupils need to know and remember. Pupils can talk about Grace Darling and explain why she was a significant person in history.

In science, plans set out key knowledge that pupils should learn. Pupils remember facts that they have learned in science. For example, pupils know what carnivores, herbivores and omnivores are. Pupils know that some materials can be bent and twisted.

The knowledge that teachers expect pupils to learn is not set out clearly enough in all of the school's plans. For example, plans in the early years do not identify the knowledge that pupils should learn to prepare them for the next year. Plans in subjects such as design technology, music and computing are not developed enough.

Leaders' improvement plans focus on phonics, early reading, the curriculum and assessment. Leaders' priorities include training for subject leaders and the school's governors. Local authority representatives check leaders' plans and provide support.

Leaders responsible for English receive training arranged by the local English hub. They use this training to improve the quality of the curriculum for reading and

phonics. Staff are trained to deliver phonics teaching. There is a consistent approach to encouraging pupils to use their phonics knowledge when tackling unknown words. Pupils at risk of falling behind are given extra support to help them catch up. Books are matched well to pupils' needs. Pupils enjoy reading and talking about books.

Teachers do not always adapt the curriculum so that pupils with SEND can access the same lesson content as others. For example, some pupils' books show that pupils spend time writing out questions rather than focusing on the answers. On occasions, this leads to pupils not gaining a secure understanding of the learning. The school's assessment systems do not always help teachers to check pupils' understanding and tackle any gaps in their learning.

Governors understand their responsibilities. They seek support from the local authority and hold leaders to account. They have an improving grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Parents and carers are broadly supportive of the school. However, a significant minority do not support the school. Leaders and governors are working to address this barrier.

Additional support

The local authority checks the impact of leaders' work and supports the school. Representatives of the local authority provide training for subject leaders and governors.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I observed pupils reading to staff. I reviewed responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 8 free-text responses, and 13 staff questionnaires. I reviewed the school's plans for improvement and minutes of governors' meetings. I reviewed reports from the local authority. I scrutinised the single central record of pre-employment checks.

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

Yours sincerely

Damien Turrell
Her Majesty's Inspector