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Caroline Boddy
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Boddy

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Donnington Wood Infant School and Nursery Centre

Following my visit to your school on 24 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.

Context

Since the last inspection in June 2019, you have completely restructured the governing body. A new chair of the governing body was appointed in November 2019 and a new vice chair of the governing body was appointed in November 2020.

At the time of the inspection you had one 'bubble' closed due to COVID-19. These pupils were learning remotely. This was the school's first 'bubble' closure.

Leaders had to adapt their improvement plans because of the disruption caused by COVID-19. However, the momentum for change has not slowed. Leaders instead focused on improvements they could make during this time.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, leaders have wasted no time improving the school. They have focused on the right things, including developing the curriculum. Leaders have shown flexibility and not let the limitations of COVID-19 hold them back. They successfully adapted their development plans to focus on improvements they could make while the school was partially closed during the recent national lockdowns.

Leaders have improved the school's curriculum. They have rewritten the full curriculum to ensure that there is a clear sequence to learning in most subjects, including in the early years. They have mapped out opportunities for pupils to practise their learning in different contexts. This is helping pupils to remember more of what has been taught. Leaders have thought carefully about the order in which pupils learn. An example of this is when Year 2 pupils learned about the properties of materials, before learning about the Great Fire of London. This meant that pupils had a secure understanding of why the fire spread so quickly across London. Leaders are aware they still need to ensure that music and religious education are planned to this level of detail. Plans are in place to ensure that these are ready for September 2021.

The school's values of 'learning, caring and preparing' are at the heart of the school. Previously, there was a heavier focus on 'caring'. Leaders have now ensured that pupils are 'learning' more, and being prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Previously, staff did not know what was expected of pupils in their year groups. Staff now know what the pupils should learn, and when, through clear curriculum planning.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) knows the pupils well. There is an inclusive approach to teaching pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers have higher expectations of what pupils with SEND can do. Teachers now take ownership in their approach to supporting pupils. They plan

for pupils with SEND to work alongside their peers. Teachers support pupils who need extra help effectively.

The early years foundation stage has improved since the last inspection. Leaders have focused on developing a smooth transition from Nursery to Reception. Leaders found that some of the fundamental weaknesses in the quality of education started in Reception. Leaders have addressed these. Teachers quickly spot children who have gaps in learning and address these quickly. Children in Reception now achieve well. Their curriculum is well sequenced to help them understand and remember their learning. Children are now much better prepared for the challenges of Year 1.

There has been a sharp focus on reading, including in the early years. Leaders have made sure that the love of reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Younger pupils use their phonics knowledge to read confidently. Teachers carefully check the phonic sounds that children know. Staff provide effective support if children fall behind. Leaders acted swiftly to make sure that the books children read contain the sounds that they know. They have ensured that children know and love a variety of stories and books.

Governors are committed to improving the pupils' learning experience. They recognise that the school is on an improvement journey. They reflect on the many improvements, but know there is still more to do. Governors have received bespoke training from the school improvement partner and are now asking the right questions of senior leaders. They can hold leaders to account well.

Additional support

Additional support has been used to improve the school. The school's improvement adviser has helped leaders to identify and address the root causes that were holding the school back. Leaders and the school's adviser worked together to address the systemic issues that needed tackling before the school could move forward. This support has been a real catalyst for change. Governors also say that this support has been invaluable.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, SENCo and assistant headteacher. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the school's improvement partner to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I spoke with a group of pupils and heard one read to an adult. I visited phonics lessons, looked at pupils' workbooks and checked curriculum plans. I examined the school's single central record and minutes of governors' meetings. I considered the 29 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 27 free-text responses, as well as 23 staff questionnaires.

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

Eve Morris
Her Majesty's Inspector