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Andrew Edwards
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Dear Mr Edwards

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wolvey CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 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 taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

Context

The school's leadership team has changed considerably since the last section 5 inspection. An interim head of school was employed to cover a period of planned leave of the head of school. This appointment was made permanent in March 2021.

The previous head of school has returned for a temporary period of time and is providing specialist support to staff in the early years. Leaders have recruited a new mathematics leader to start in September 2021 to replace the previous postholder. In addition, you intend to expand the size of the senior leadership team in September 2021. An assistant headteacher has been appointed from within the school.

Main findings

Changes in leadership and staffing since the previous section 5 inspection have resulted in instability. Some parents have found this unsettling. However, your consistent oversight, and stability in school governance, have ensured that actions taken to improve the school are effective. You and the head of school have worked together well since March 2020. You have started to build a strong team of leaders but acknowledge that more work is required to achieve this aim.

The school's improvement plan is sufficiently specific about the actions that leaders are taking. The plan rightly focuses on improving the quality of the curriculum. Leaders have clear roles and responsibilities. They monitor the success of their actions by regularly reviewing and adapting the improvement plan. They then use this information when reporting to governors.

Governors are committed and care deeply about the school. They have systems in place to support and challenge leaders effectively. These systems include work to monitor the quality of education in the school. Governors use 'subject spotlights' to help them understand how the curriculum is improving. They meet with middle leaders and discuss what pupils should know and remember in different subjects. They ask questions about the progress that pupils are making. As a result, governors have an accurate view of the school.

Leaders ensure that staff benefit from opportunities for professional development. These opportunities are aligned with the school's work to improve the curriculum. Curriculum leaders have worked with subject specialists from other local schools. This has helped them identify the essential knowledge and skills they expect pupils to know each year. Leaders ensure that middle leaders have sufficient time to monitor the impact of their action plans. This is helping them to become more effective in improving the curriculum.

Leaders adopted a new scheme of work for teaching mathematics after the last section 5 inspection. Leaders expect all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to learn the planned curriculum. Curriculum plans outline what pupils are expected to learn year by year. This information helps teachers check that pupils remember the important facts and ideas they need to make progress. Leaders have ensured that teachers understand how to teach mathematics well. For example, teachers introduce new ideas in small steps. They

help pupils to practise what they have learned before moving on to broader concepts. Consequently, pupils are becoming better mathematicians.

Leaders make sure that reading is everyone's priority. They have introduced a well-organised approach to teaching phonics. Staff understand this approach, and now teach phonics more consistently. Teachers have identified that some younger pupils fell behind in reading during partial school closures caused by the pandemic. Adults are now providing additional support for pupils who need it. For instance, some pupils attend an after-school reading club - 'rocket readers!'. This provides extra time for pupils to practise using the letters and sounds that they learn. In addition, leaders have encouraged staff to promote a love of reading to all pupils. All teachers read aloud to their classes every day. Pupils have opportunities to discuss their thoughts and opinions about the stories that they read. As a result, there is a growing love of reading in the school.

Leaders have ensured that curriculum plans for foundation subjects clearly set out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary they expect pupils to learn. Teachers share this information with pupils in 'knowledge organisers'. These documents focus pupils' attention on the key information that they need to remember. Teachers set tasks and ask questions to check the progress that pupils make. However, leaders have not yet decided how to check pupils' progress in some foundation subjects.

At the last section 5 inspection, you were asked to improve outcomes for children in the early years foundation stage. An experienced early years teacher has worked with staff to demonstrate good practice. This has developed staff expertise. They are now more confident. They provide clear explanations and ask questions that help children to develop their use of language. In addition, leaders took swift action to refresh the learning environment. Provision is well organised and better resourced. Teachers ensure that pupils use resources in a purposeful way. The setting is calm. This helps children to concentrate on the things they need to learn.

Leaders expect all pupils to attend school regularly. Almost a third of pupils did not attend regularly in the autumn term 2020. These pupils were not isolating for reasons associated with coronavirus. Leaders took necessary action to manage this situation. Consequently, attendance has improved. However, some pupils still have too much time off from school. Leaders intend to continue working with families to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

Additional support

Leaders have welcomed support from Warwickshire local authority and the diocese of Coventry. They have also worked with a national leader of education and leaders in other schools. This support has helped leaders to raise their expectations about the quality of the curriculum. It has developed middle leaders' confidence and provided them with a better understanding of the how to evaluate pupils' progress.

In addition, a local authority has helped leaders to access additional funding. They have used this funding to improve the learning environment in the EYFS.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the head of school and curriculum leaders. I also discussed the actions taken since the last inspection with representatives of those responsible for governance, a representative of the local authority and a representative of the diocese of Coventry.

I scrutinised the school's single central record of checks on staff. I reviewed the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan and minutes of governors' meetings. I looked at curriculum plans alongside pupils' workbooks. I also visited lessons with the head of school. In addition, I reviewed responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text responses, and 20 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Leonard
Her Majesty's Inspector