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Sam Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Smith

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hawkesley Church Primary Academy

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 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

The leadership team has been restructured since the school's last section 5 inspection. The team now includes two new assistant headteachers. There has also been a recent change in leadership in the early years. At the time of this inspection, the Year 3 'bubble' and their class teacher were self-isolating and working remotely.

Main findings

You and your leadership team have high expectations and are determined to make sure that pupils receive a good quality of education. You told me that you want the school to be 'the best'. This demonstrates your high ambition for pupils. Leaders and staff have worked hard to address the areas presented in the last inspection report. You have focused on the right priorities in order to bring about positive changes to the curriculum, provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and safeguarding systems.

Well-designed and coherently sequenced plans are now in place for all subjects. You have focused carefully on end goals to make sure that pupils are taught the content required to meet the expectations set out in the national curriculum. You regularly assess pupils to identify any gaps or weaknesses in their learning. You use this information effectively to plan to cover missed content and reteach areas which pupils have not fully grasped. However, within topics, some links to subject-specific knowledge are ambiguous. This means that pupils are not fully clear about which subject they are learning and can lead to confusion of knowledge taught.

You have ensured that all curriculum leaders have access to professional support and training opportunities to develop greater expertise in their subject areas. Coaching and mentoring have been provided by senior leaders and members of the trust. All curriculum leaders have carried out checks of staff subject knowledge. They have used the information gathered to provide individual training sessions for staff where needed. Subject leaders also present their evaluations to governors. This demonstrates greater accountability in their roles and evidence of their increased subject ownership.

Reading leaders share your high ambition and determination to underpin pupils' learning with strong reading skills and a love of literature. New books and attractive reading areas encourage and entice pupils to read. Some pupils say openly that they now love reading. The teaching of phonics is effective. Changes made in the early years mean that consistency and progression in phonics have now improved. Pupils gain a secure knowledge of their letters and sounds. They use this knowledge well to break down and blend unfamiliar words. All staff have received phonic training from the English leader and an external consultant. As a result, they have a firm understanding of how to teach reading and early reading.

Teachers adjust lesson content well to meet the needs of pupils' different abilities, including the most able and pupils with SEND. Provision for pupils who are struggling has also been further strengthened through the use of targeted, short-burst, rapid intervention programmes. Pupils are assessed at the start and end points of the programme. This enables leaders to evaluate the impact and quality of support provided. Pupils are identified early, and appropriately targeted support is implemented. The special educational needs coordinator is highly knowledgeable and closely tracks how well pupils with SEND make progress. She is relentless in accessing additional external help for pupils with complex difficulties. This ensures that these pupils achieve as well as they should across the curriculum.

You have strengthened systems for recording safeguarding incidents. The introduction of an electronic system enables the safeguarding leader to analyse and track concerns raised and ensure a clear chronology of events is recorded succinctly. Safeguarding systems are now streamlined and effective. The designated leader is knowledgeable and proactive in seeking support for pupils and their families who are vulnerable. Staff receive regular training about different potential safeguarding risks to pupils and how to report these.

You have worked hard to improve attendance and have had some degree of success. The attendance officer has a good knowledge of pupils and their families and has built good relationships with the school community. There is, therefore, an improved level of trust between families and school staff. First day calling and follow-up visits have also been effective in establishing which absences are legitimate and which are unauthorised. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing, albeit slowly. You agree that there is more work to be done on raising attendance but are confident that this can be achieved.

Governors make an effective contribution to the school's work. They provide strong challenge and support for leaders. Governors invite subject leaders to their meetings to gather updates on curriculum developments across the full range of subjects. They hold all leaders fully to account for their work and ask probing questioning in meetings. Some governors hold significant subject expertise. They use their skills commendably to provide additional training and support for subject leaders, for example in English. Governors have a clear understanding of where strengths lie and where further work is needed.

Additional support

The trust has provided regular and effective support for leaders and staff to improve the quality of education pupils receive. The chief executive officer has been instrumental and successful in stabilising school staffing and increasing the leadership capacity. Ongoing visits from the school improvement adviser and coaching sessions from trust leaders have enabled leaders at different levels to improve their skills and effectiveness. The trust rightly has confidence in you and your team. The trust conducts regular risk assessments to determine where

potential weaknesses remain and then agree appropriate actions to tackle these. This has helped maintain and improve the pace and momentum of the school's progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, both assistant headteachers, curriculum leaders, the leader for SEND and safeguarding, the attendance officer and pupils. I also met with the chief executive officer and school improvement adviser of the trust, and those responsible for governance. You accompanied me on visits to all classrooms and I observed some pupils reading to a member of staff.

I examined the safeguarding records and scrutinised the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and the trust's most recent school report. I looked at curriculum plans and pupils' workbooks. I reviewed 30 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text responses, and 19 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Birmingham Diocesan multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Birmingham, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector