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Dear Mrs Garratt

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Meynell Community Primary School

Following my visit 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 ongoing 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 curriculum plans in all subjects identify the most important knowledge that pupils need, and that these plans are logically sequenced to help pupils to build their knowledge over time

- ensure that pupils have sufficient practice with reading to become more fluent.

Context

On the day of the inspection, two year groups were absent, and two teachers were not attending school due to COVID-19. Leaders report that attendance of pupils has been affected throughout the pandemic.

The implementation of school improvement plans has been slowed due to COVID-19. You have plans to make changes to the curriculum to support pupils to catch up following the third period when schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions.

There are a number of vacancies to be filled on the governing body. Since the previous inspection, two governors have left the school.

Main findings

Following the last inspection, you focused on several key areas as part of your improvement planning. You reviewed the behaviour policy, reading, and how the curriculum is planned. You also focused on developing your leadership team. You have ensured that members of the leadership team support newer colleagues. You continue to refine your plans. Specifically, you are making changes to curriculum plans due to the impact on pupils' learning caused when schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions.

You have made progress in improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes in school. You identified that a change in culture was needed. Previously, staff did not always deal with misbehaviour consistently and some pupils did not always understand why certain behaviours, such as the use of racist language, were unacceptable. You have now introduced a 'positive behaviour management system'. All staff have attended training and now focus on praising positive behaviour. They recognise the importance of helping pupils to understand why some behaviours are not acceptable.

You have appointed a trauma informed specialist, who works with pupils, staff, parents and the wider community, to understand issues linked to bullying and mental health. The 'Anti Bullying Alliance Altogether' Gold Award has been given to the school in recognition of the work done. You have trained staff to help pupils to understand their own emotions and to manage any inappropriate behaviour more effectively. This has resulted in a drop in the numbers of pupils excluded from the school. You recognise that this is still a work in progress.

Reading is now at the centre of the curriculum at Meynell. Teachers ensure that pupils in the earliest years are taught phonics using the school's chosen approach consistently. Books are well matched to the needs of the pupils and enable them to

practise taught sounds. All staff in the early years and key stage 1 have received training and are knowledgeable about the phonics curriculum. There is some inconsistency in the support pupils receive to develop their fluency in reading. Some staff miss opportunities to read sentences back to pupils. Therefore, pupils do not always hear how fluent reading should sound. You plan to revisit training with staff in order to ensure that they understand the importance of pupils hearing sentences read smoothly and clearly.

In key stage 2 leaders have created a reading list of core texts. These texts support subject teaching through stories in each class. Teachers use these books daily in order to develop an interest in reading among pupils and explore new vocabulary. Several pupils, however, find it difficult to read these texts independently, as their reading skills are not sufficiently secure. Some pupils are not fluent enough in their reading.

You are determined to improve the teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics. There are clear, long-term plans in place to support teaching in subjects such as history, geography and science. These show that you are ambitious for pupils' learning. Leaders have mapped out key questions and vocabulary which will be taught in different subjects. They have identified concepts which will be taught through the subjects. These include equality, aspiration, fairness and health. The development of these is currently at an early stage.

There has been a delay in reviewing the curriculum in some other subjects, such as art and design technology, due to COVID-19. You recognise that these subjects are still at the beginning of development. There is further work to do to identify the details of what specific knowledge pupils will learn in each year group. Without this, teachers are not clear about what pupils should already know in order to inform their planning.

Governors say that the school has improved since the last inspection. You keep them informed of improvement work through regular meetings. You encourage them to visit the school and see the impact of the changes. These visits have not been able to happen regularly due to COVID-19 restrictions. However, governors are keen to resume them as soon as they are able to. Governors work well with key colleagues in school, such as the special educational needs co-ordinator, to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are at the forefront of the school's improvement decisions.

Additional support

The primary director of learning for the trust has worked closely with you to implement improvement plans. The trust has provided training opportunities for staff and encourages new leaders to work with them to deliver network meetings for other trust schools. This has enabled some subject leaders to develop greater confidence in their role. There are plans for the trust to continue to work with you on future changes to the curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, four assistant headteachers, the curriculum leaders for geography and design technology, members of teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils, the primary director of education for Tipton School Academy Trust and representatives of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited phonics and reading lessons as well as listening to pupils read. I reviewed planning documents for reading, geography and design technology. I considered school improvement plans and the school's own self-evaluation document. I looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 45 responses and 39 free-text responses, and 32 questionnaires for staff.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the Tipton School Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Andrea Batley
Her Majesty's Inspector