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7 September 2021

Sophie Charter
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Dear Mrs Charter

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Abbey Woods 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 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:

- closely monitor the teaching of early reading to ensure that all pupils access the support they require to learn to read
- ensure that teachers more consistently check the knowledge pupils have learned and what they need to learn next across all subjects taught.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to the senior leadership of the school. You took up the substantive post of headteacher from April 2020, after being the joint head of school from October 2019. Your deputy headteacher left the school in February 2021. The interim part-time special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has also been in post since March 2021.

Staffing has been challenging in some year groups. Staff and pupils in key stage 1 have experienced a recent period of isolation. A new deputy headteacher and a full-time SENCo have been appointed to start work in September 2021.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you have started making improvements to curriculum plans. These are in the early stages of being implemented in each year group. Some subjects, such as music and physical education, do not yet have long-term plans in place.

The knowledge to be taught in subjects like science and geography has been carefully selected. However, the topics are not always taught in an order that allows pupils to know more and remember more over time. Pupils can confidently describe their current learning, but the most important learning has not yet been prioritised. Pupils struggle to remember important links to previous learning and some pupils have large gaps in their knowledge.

Since the previous inspection, you have not prioritised a consistent approach to teaching early reading. COVID-19-related absence has delayed all staff being trained to implement your chosen phonics programme. There are not yet effective systems in place to identify and check on pupils' gaps in knowledge effectively. You have plans in place to ensure that all pupils make a positive start to early reading.

In key stage 2, pupils talk positively about the books they have been reading in class. Pupils can confidently describe a range of stories, poems and non-fiction texts that cover a diverse range of themes.

More recently, there have been improvements in the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Following the recruitment of a new SENCo, the identification of the needs of pupils has significantly improved. This has been particularly important to secure the appropriate external agency support for pupils who have complex special educational needs. Although the SENCo is supporting staff to meet the needs of pupils with SEND, you acknowledge that there is more to do. As yet, not all staff have received specific training to ensure that the needs of all pupils are consistently met within the classroom. You recognise the

importance of training all staff to ensure that all pupils receive the precise teaching they need to achieve well.

Governors understand their responsibilities and show commitment to improving the school. Training and guidance from the trust has strengthened the support and challenge given to you and your leaders by governors. The governors particularly value the joint visits to the school with trust representatives. These strengthen their knowledge and develop their ability to support your improvements.

Additional support

You are working closely with the trust to implement plans for further development. There are plans in place to provide leadership support to middle leaders and staff training to develop the curriculum. The trust has also supported the appointment of new staff to begin in September 2021.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, the multi-academy trust chief executive officer and director of education, representatives of those responsible for local governance and members of staff to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also spoke with pupils with their workbooks, visited a number of lessons and observed pupils reading to an adult. I reviewed information on the school's website and considered a range of documentation provided by school leaders. I considered the views of 23 parents through Ofsted's Parent View online survey, including 12 written comments. I also took into account the views of staff through conversations and responses to the online staff survey.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of Anthem Schools Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Hanna Miller
Her Majesty's Inspector