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Laura Martin
Head of School
Francis Askew Primary School
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Dear Mrs Martin

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Francis Askew 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 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:

- ensure that curriculum plans in all subjects set out clearly what pupils should know, and in what order, and that these are implemented as planned in September 2021
- ensure that teachers use the agreed techniques for teaching systematic synthetic phonics consistently.

Context

There have been several changes to the leadership team since the school's last section 5 inspection.

An executive headteacher from the trust is supporting the new head of school who took up post in January 2021. A new deputy headteacher will take up post in September 2021. Two members of the senior leadership team have recently returned from maternity leave. This has stabilised the new leadership team.

Leaders' plans to accelerate improvements in the school were disrupted by COVID-19. This included a full closure of the school in autumn term 2020 due to a local lockdown, followed by instances of staff self-isolation. Additionally, some aspects of monitoring and planned training activities were hindered. Leaders' actions to address pockets of weaker teaching slowed but are now back on track.

Main findings

Leaders have prioritised the right things, in the right order, to make improvements. Staff are proud to work at the school. The journey to becoming a good school is underway but there is more to do. The newly formed leadership team, with the support of the trust, has started to rebuild the school's curriculum. They started with reading, mathematics and writing and are now focusing on other subject areas.

Leaders want to ensure that their new curriculum prepares Francis Askew pupils for life. The trust has supported leaders and teachers to write curriculum plans in most subject areas. Others are due to be written and should be ready for the start of the new term in autumn 2021. Leaders are beginning to build an ambitious curriculum that sets out what pupils should know, and in what order.

The trust has taken steps to strengthen subject leadership. New subject leaders are supported through appropriate training. Subject leader confidence in teaching their subject and developing their knowledge and skills is growing. Plans are in place for subject leaders to begin checking how well their subject is being taught from September 2021.

Staff are ambitious for all pupils. However, there are still occasions when work does not match the needs of all pupils. This is more evident for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have started to improve the provision for pupils with SEND. Senior leaders are now monitoring teaching more closely to ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are being met.

Leaders have rightly prioritised improving the curriculum for early reading and phonics. They have introduced a new phonics programme and have invested in resourcing it fully. This is helping teachers to deliver lessons with more confidence. Leaders have acted to ensure that all staff have been trained to use the phonics

programme. However, teachers do not follow the phonics programme's strategies consistently. For example, the modelling of how to blend sounds together is inconsistent. This hinders pupils' progress with their phonics knowledge. The introduction of the phonics programme plans to address longstanding weaknesses in pupils' reading. About a third of pupils in Year 3 still need phonics teaching. This is affecting their ability to read age-appropriate books with fluency.

Leaders have ensured that the teaching sequences for writing are clear. This has impacted positively on the quality of pupils' writing in the wider curriculum. Pupils know they must produce work of the same high standard in English and other subjects. For example, in Year 2 pupils learned to write instructions; later that week in science they wrote instructions linked to an investigation. Teachers help pupils to remember key knowledge and transfer it to other areas of the curriculum.

Governors are committed to improving the school. However, they have a more positive view of the school's progress towards becoming a good school than is the case. School and trust leaders need to support the governing body to better understand the pathway to becoming a good school.

Additional support

The trust is providing substantial support to the school. The trust is clear about the areas for improvement. It is committed to continuing to provide the school with the executive headteacher's support, which has already accelerated the improvement process.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the executive headteacher, other senior leaders and the multi-academy trust chief executive officer. I also met with pupils, staff, and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons, heard pupils read to a familiar adult, scrutinised the records of checks carried out on staff who work at the school, and looked at draft curriculum plans and work in pupils' books.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of The Constellation Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kingston Upon Hull City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Alison Stephenson
Her Majesty's Inspector