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Liz Filer  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Filer

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Valentine Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 16 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:

- put in place a complete, systematic phonics programme from the beginning of the Reception Year, where pupils read books that match the sounds they have learned, and train all staff to deliver this programme effectively
- continue with planning all subjects so that knowledge is well sequenced, and staff are clear what pupils should learn and by when
- sharpen school improvement planning so that it clearly sets out leaders' actions for the intent and implementation of the school's curriculum so that impact is linked to what pupils know and remember.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection in March 2019, an additional deputy headteacher has been appointed. The vice chair of governors became the chair of governors in April 2021. Three new governors have joined the governing body.

## **Main findings**

You and your team are moving forward with your plans to provide a better education for all pupils. You have led with moral purpose to support a school community that has faced adversity throughout the pandemic but have not let this detract you from work to improve the school. Nonetheless, COVID-19 has impacted upon your plans of where you would like to be at this stage.

Governors are well informed and perceptive about the school's progress. They are holding leaders more rigorously to account for the quality of education that pupils receive. However, the school's plans for improvement focus mainly on collecting and analysing assessment data. These plans do not identify how you are constructing a curriculum which prioritises knowledge and how you want staff to deliver this. The assessment checks on the plan do not closely link to how pupils are acquiring more knowledge across the subjects. You recognise that the improvement plan, in its current form, needs sharpening.

Notwithstanding, you and your leaders are indeed thinking carefully about the essential knowledge pupils need to learn from early years to Year 6. Planning in all subjects is firmly underway. You have swiftly addressed the required actions identified at the additional, remote inspection in March 2021.

Your development of subject leaders is enabling them to take ownership in leading their subject. They are now beginning to consider the sequencing of knowledge within a unit of work so that pupils' learning builds over time. To deliver the new curriculum, they are strengthening staff's subject knowledge and the choice of activities that will better help pupils' learning. Subject leaders are working with staff to assess more precisely in lessons what pupils know and remember.

The school's approach to teaching phonics is not working as intended. Children in Reception Year are not getting off to a quick start in learning to read. Staff have not had the necessary training to deliver a complete phonics programme consistently. As a result, staff use a mix of resources and approaches, which is hindering pupils' progress in reading, spelling and writing. Although leaders are providing pupils with books from one reading scheme, these are not matched precisely to the sounds pupils learn in lessons. In addition, one-to-one catch-up sessions are not enabling pupils to practise reading fluently and with an increasing speed. This is because staff focus on asking comprehension questions which reduce the time that pupils can practise reading aloud. Consequently, the teaching of early reading is disconnected.

That said, in reading across the school, pupils enjoy the books that staff read to them. In key stage 2, you are ensuring that pupils read books of different genres and by different authors, which are providing pupils with an ever-growing vocabulary.

### **Additional support**

The local authority is working with leaders on school improvement planning, the development of subject leaders, curriculum design and how teachers deliver the curriculum. A national leader of education has worked jointly with the local authority to strengthen governance.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, the senior leadership team, subject leaders, pupils, representatives from the governing body, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons, heard pupils read and looked at pupils' work in different subjects. I reviewed the school improvement plan and curriculum plans. I checked the single central record of the suitability of staff to work with children. I also looked at 67 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 89 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 23 free-text comments.

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

Yours sincerely

James Broadbridge  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**