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Mr Ben Eddy
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Dear Mr Eddy

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Fowey River Academy

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 two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the second 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:

- develop pupils' literacy skills in every subject area.

Context

This was the second monitoring visit since the school's section 5 inspection in September 2019. Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership of the school. A new headteacher has been appointed alongside several other senior leaders, including an assistant headteacher responsible for literacy and a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). Leaders and governors have worked diligently to address weaknesses identified in the section 5 inspection report. However, the challenges posed by the pandemic have affected the pace of improvement in some areas.

Main findings

School and trust leaders have high aspirations and expectations for the academic and pastoral success of pupils. Leaders' vision for a curriculum that enables pupils to develop knowledge in a range of subjects drives improvement across the school. This vision is shared by staff. They are proud to work at the school. Pupils are ambitious to do well.

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum to ensure that pupils revisit prior knowledge to help them learn new concepts successfully. Leaders and staff have worked hard to develop well-sequenced programmes in many areas. They have also integrated learning with digital tools so that pupils can practise and revise their learning at home and in school. However, the pandemic has affected the pace of improvement. As a result, some subjects, such as modern foreign languages, have not fully implemented a well-sequenced curriculum. Leaders plan to implement a revised system of monitoring in September to support further development of the curriculum.

Leaders have prioritised reading across the curriculum. Pupils read regularly in tutor time as well as in other curriculum areas. Leaders regularly assess pupils' reading to ensure that support is tailored to meet the needs of pupils. Although staff have been trained in a range of strategies, such as phonics, they have not yet been fully implemented. Leaders have identified literacy as a barrier for many pupils to be successful in a range of subjects. Consequently, leaders have prioritised the learning of vocabulary in every subject area. However, this is still not fully embedded across the school. Similarly, the teaching and learning of literacy skills required for specific subjects have not been fully developed.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) from the trust has strengthened the identification of pupils with SEND. This means that more pupils now receive the support they require. Together with the school SENCo, she has introduced staff training in a range of areas such as autism to improve provision. However, school and trust leaders have not yet fully monitored the impact of this work due to the challenges imposed by the pandemic. Leaders have created a harmonious learning

space for pupils who require social, emotional and academic support. Pupils thrive in this setting.

Leaders track closely the support for pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding. The chair of the local academy committee reviewed these pupils' experiences of the curriculum. Literacy was identified as a significant barrier to pupils' success. Leaders have focused on implementing literacy support but it is still not yet fully embedded. Leaders have also prioritised increasing pupils' attendance.

Safeguarding procedures are stringent. Leaders are vigilant about the physical and emotional well-being of pupils. Leaders have established pupil focus groups to inform the personal, social, health and economic curriculum to ensure that it meets their interests and needs.

The local academy committee provides effective support and challenge in equal measure. They gather information about the curriculum and ask pertinent questions. Their work helps school and trust leaders to strengthen the curriculum.

Additional support

The Leading Edge Academies Partnership has been effective in supporting improvements to the curriculum at the school. It has enabled leaders to share and learn from a range of approaches to teaching and learning across the partnership.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, the chief executive officer of the trust, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, and the chair and vice-chair of the local academy committee to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons in some year groups, looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and reviewed school documentation, including the minutes of the local academy committee. I looked at 90 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 76 free-text responses as well as 48 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local academy committee, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Leading Edge Academies Partnership multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Aykin
Her Majesty's Inspector