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Mrs Jane Fraser
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Fraser

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Newsome Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 14 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. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school 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 have clear opportunities for revisiting past learning built into them

- train teachers on how to assess what has been taught in all subjects so that they quickly identify where pupils need further support.

Context

Leaders had planned to train subject leaders in the school. This training has not taken place due to the impact of COVID-19. Subject leaders have not been able to visit other classrooms or meet with teachers. This means that they have less information about how effective the curriculum is in the subjects that they lead. This part of the leaders' improvement plan has been significantly disrupted by the impact of COVID-19.

Since the last inspection, six members of the governing body have left. This includes the previous chair of governors. A new chair of the governing body is now in post. The local authority is supporting the school to recruit more governors.

The local authority has put plans in place to provide an additional assistant headteacher to join the school from September. This role will be focused on improving the teaching of the school's curriculum.

Main findings

You are taking the right actions to improve the school. You know that you still have much to do. You have plans for what needs to be done. Leaders understand their roles in implementing these plans. These plans are focused on the right areas.

You have made sure that there are curriculum plans in all subjects. Leaders have matched their plans to the national curriculum. These plans state what should be taught and when. Some of them are more developed than others. You have identified that many of these plans still require more detail for teachers.

Teachers do not ensure pupils revisit learning. Teachers do not all know how to do this. Leaders have identified the knowledge pupils should learn. However, plans do not set out what knowledge teachers should revisit. Teachers only revisit learning if they have extensive knowledge and experience in what they are teaching. Pupils do not build on their prior knowledge well enough and so do not remember much of what they have been taught.

You have improved the teaching of reading. Teachers choose books which engage and enthuse pupils. Pupils can recall details of books they have studied in the past. Teachers know how to question pupils about their understanding of these books. Teachers use poems and extracts of stories to support pupils in developing their vocabulary. Pupils use this new vocabulary in their writing.

You have trained staff in how to teach phonics. You have made sure that you know if any pupils have not mastered the basics in early reading when they arrive at the school. Staff then plan suitable learning for these pupils. Pupils read books which are matched to the sounds that they are learning. They practise spellings linked to these sounds. Pupils are catching up with where they need to be.

Teachers are getting better at picking up on the errors pupils make. Teachers are starting to use questions to see how well pupils have understood. They check pupils' work in books. Teachers then give extra support to those who need it. You know that some teachers still need to respond to these misconceptions sooner.

In some subjects, teachers rely on tests to tell them how well pupils are doing. Not all teachers check how much pupils have remembered based on what they were taught. The assessments that teachers use do not match the curriculum in every subject. Some pupils do not get the help that they need quickly enough.

Staff and pupils know the behaviour policy, that you brought in, well. You have also written a relational policy. Staff know what they need to do. They know what positive behaviour looks like. Pupils are responding to this. During the inspection, pupils were polite and courteous to each other. They listened to the answers of their classmates. Pupils know the routines that help with their learning. They are keen to impress their teachers.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has trained all staff on how to support pupils in their class. If pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) need more support, then the SENCo works with the teacher to plan it. The SENCo checks that this support is working. Pupils with SEND are given well-matched interventions. These are focused on the basic skills and knowledge that they need.

Governors know that, in the past, they have not been strategic enough. They did not have the training and expertise they needed to hold leaders to account. They have now sought training. They have made their individual roles and responsibilities clearer. Governors now know that they need to ask the right questions to check on the quality of education. Subject leaders have started to attend governor meetings to talk about the curriculum. Governors are beginning to gain a better understanding of the quality of education in the school.

Additional support

You have used external support well. The local authority has supported you to develop your leadership team. Leaders are clearer about their roles. The local authority has helped you check the quality of what is being taught. It has directed support to the school from a national leader for education (NLE). This NLE has provided reading experts to help you train your staff. These staff can now teach more effective phonics sessions.

The local authority is supporting the governing body to fulfil their duties more effectively. It is sourcing governors who have the skills that the governing body needs.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, representatives of those responsible for governance, a representative of the local authority and the NLE who is supporting the school to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I also met with a group of pupils to discuss their learning and behaviour. I met with the SENCo and a behaviour practitioner. I met with the leaders for English, mathematics, art and design, and computing to discuss their curriculum plans. I looked at work in mathematics and art and design. I watched a one-to-one phonics session and visited two reading lessons. I checked the records that leaders keep about staff and visitors to the school.

I also considered the views of 56 parents and 26 staff through online surveys. I considered 36 written views of parents through their free text responses.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Knox
Her Majesty's Inspector