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Elizabeth Bilton
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Dear Miss Bilton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wallsend St Peter's CofE Aided Primary School

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 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 not taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- provide support to pupils who are at the early stages of reading to help them to become fluent readers
- identify and sequence the knowledge you want pupils to know, in all subjects, and use this to assess what pupils can remember
- monitor how well the curriculum is being implemented and use the findings to improve, while ensuring that leaders are held to account
- take every opportunity for governors' training so that the newly formed governing body can support and challenge leaders effectively to increase the pace of school improvement.

Context

Since the previous inspection, COVID-19 has significantly delayed leaders' plans to improve the school, particularly in the early years. There have been significant changes to the governing body. One member of the governing body remains since the previous inspection. There is a new chair and vice-chair of governors. Since January 2021, the new governing body has undertaken training to help its members to develop their roles. Leaders appointed an acting assistant headteacher from another school and a part-time special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo). This has increased leadership capacity in the absence of a deputy headteacher. You have appointed a deputy headteacher to start in September 2021. Several staff have taken on roles as subject leaders.

Main findings

Leaders have identified the right actions to take to become a good school. However, while some of these actions are under way, they have not been implemented quickly enough. While some improvements have been seen in English and mathematics, there is still much to do in other subjects.

In geography, teachers are unable to check effectively what they want pupils to remember. They cannot identify gaps in their learning. This is because leaders have not identified the specific knowledge that they want pupils to learn. As a result, lessons are not sequenced in a logical order. The curriculum does not build on what pupils have learned previously. Pupils cannot remember what they have learned in geography.

Leaders carry out some checks on the impact of the curriculum through reviewing pupils' books and visiting lessons. Leaders speak to pupils about what they can remember. You use this information to hold teachers to account. However, you are not using this information to improve the curriculum. As a result, these checks have had limited impact on school improvement.

Teachers teach with fidelity to the phonics scheme that the school has chosen. Staff teach phonics daily. However, leaders do not check to see if the teaching of phonics in lessons is consistent. You are unable to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the delivery of the phonics programme.

Leaders have invested in phonically decodable books that match pupils' phonics knowledge. Pupils in Reception and Year 2 who struggle to read have additional catch-up sessions. However, pupils in Year 1 do not participate in extra sessions. This means that some pupils in Year 1 do not read as well as they might.

The early years areas are under development and there are plans to develop the internal and external spaces to enhance what is already on offer. This has been significantly delayed by the pandemic.

Governors visit the school once a week for a month as part of their 'governor of the month' review. This helps them to become familiar with the school. Leaders feel supported and challenged by this process. However, governors are not fully aware of the lack of pace in curriculum and assessment improvements. Governors are in the process of training and are becoming familiar with their roles, but further training is required.

Additional support

Leaders value the support they receive from the local authority and the diocese. Support has included a focus on subject leadership. Staff are receiving training from the early years lead at the local authority to plan the curriculum for September 2021. In addition, the local authority and the diocese have reviewed governance. As a result, they have recently provided support and training to governors.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, the acting assistant headteacher, a representative of those responsible for governance, a representative of the local authority and a representative from the diocese to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

In addition, I listened to pupils read, talked to pupils and spoke to members of staff. I visited lessons and spoke to the geography lead. I looked at parent and staff surveys, governor minutes and other documentation. I reviewed the single central record.

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

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Thomas
Her Majesty's Inspector