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Deborah Currans
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Dear Mrs Currans

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Tweedmouth Prior Park First School

Following my visit to your school on 24 September 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 ongoing 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 there is a clear plan to assess pupils' learning in the foundation subjects. This will enable teachers, leaders and those responsible for governance to identify and address any gaps in pupils' knowledge that will have an impact on their future learning
- prioritise opportunities for subject monitoring to allow subject leaders to identify and act promptly on any areas for development.

Context

Two members of the governing body left following the last inspection. An active recruitment campaign for new parent governors is under way.

You have capitalised on the time available for staff to complete professional development remotely. This has ensured that planned developments to the curriculum have continued. The COVID-19 class bubble restrictions prevented your subject leaders from visiting other classes. This has limited your subject monitoring programme. You recognise that this now needs to get back on track.

Main findings

Pupils have come back to school eager to learn. The vast majority are attending every day and on time. You are working in partnership with the local authority's education welfare officer to reduce the number of persistent absences further.

You have continued to prioritise the development of early reading. Rigorous sequencing of the teaching of phonics, supported by regular assessments, ensures that all pupils have the chance to succeed. Daily targeted interventions ensure that all pupils keep up with the phonics programme. The reading leader's expert knowledge and infectious enthusiasm contribute to highly effective training and support for all staff. Levels of consistency in the teaching of reading are high.

You have made sure that there is clear progression from the learning in phonics through to wider reading development in key stage 2. Teachers are using the new reading scheme well to support pupils' understanding and confidence. You have selected books for each year group that relate to their subject knowledge. These help to develop an enjoyment of reading. Reading underpins all areas of the curriculum.

With support from senior leaders and the local authority's school improvement partner, subject leaders have strengthened their confidence and understanding of how to lead their subjects. Leaders have implemented carefully sequenced subject plans. These start in the early years and identify the development of key vocabulary and knowledge in each year group. A range of visits and events enrich the curriculum. For example, in science, you have identified a range of scientists, some from the local area, to illustrate the range of scientific careers that are available. In history, visits to sites such as the Grace Darling

Museum, Holy Island and the barracks and walls of Berwick, strengthen pupils' connection to their local area.

Assessment within subjects other than English and mathematics is less well developed. Lessons provide opportunities for pupils to review prior learning, but leaders have not ensured that this is applied systematically. This means that teachers do not identify gaps in knowledge consistently before moving on to new learning. Leaders should build on the robust approaches in early reading to identify regular assessment opportunities in each subject area.

Governors have a broad understanding of recent curriculum developments. They have maintained opportunities to monitor and challenge leaders throughout the period of COVID-19. Governors now need to actively monitor the impact of each subject area on pupils' readiness for the next stage of learning.

Additional support

The local authority school improvement partner supports the school well. You told me that you appreciate the challenge that he provides and the support and care that he shows for the school. He has a good understanding of the next steps for curriculum development.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I observed pupils reading to a familiar adult, scrutinised the records of checks carried out on staff who work at the school, looked at curriculum plans, the school's improvement plans, minutes from meetings of the governing body and work in pupils' books.

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

Yours sincerely

Alex Thorp
Her Majesty's Inspector