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Dear Mr Bagley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Pelsall Village School

Following my visit to your school on 19 January 2022, 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 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:

- embed the good practice training so that teachers consistently identify pupils' mistakes and address them quickly
- ensure that, when leaders are monitoring pupils' progress, they pick up on those pupils who have exceeded their targets, in addition to those already being identified as requiring more support to catch up

- ensure that subject leaders have the opportunity to evaluate the impact of the curriculum for their subjects and provide targeted support when teachers need it
- ensure that pupils know and understand key subject-specific vocabulary so that they can use these terms with confidence in speech and writing.

Context

Although staff and pupil absence due to COVID-19 has adversely affected the delivery of the school's improvement plans, curriculum development has continued. The implementation and evaluation of impact of some development plans have been slightly delayed. Staff have been unable to carry out the normal teacher assessment moderation activities with other schools.

The school's last inspection took place shortly after the current headteacher took up the post. The chair of the governing body has changed since the previous inspection. This was within the normal cycle of appointments to the governing body.

Main findings

You have ensured that significant strides in improvement have been made since the last inspection, despite the challenges of COVID-19. The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection are being addressed systematically. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have risen and are suitably high. In mathematics, pupils work through increasingly complex challenges at the most appropriate level for them. Teachers check how much pupils remember from previous lessons before moving on to the next steps. They provide timely support for any pupils that need it. Other pupils move on to the next steps without delay. As a result, more pupils are achieving higher standards in mathematics. This improvement is evident in pupils' work.

Teachers have clearly benefited from training in best practice in teaching and learning. However, some of these new approaches are not yet consistently embedded. Some teachers do not pick up on pupils' mistakes as quickly as they should. When this happens, pupils' misconceptions persist, and this makes it harder for them to move on to the next steps.

You have put in place much more rigorous monitoring procedures since the last inspection. You and other leaders now check the progress pupils are making against the school's own targets. You discuss with teachers regularly which pupils need more support to achieve their termly targets. You agree that you have not focused as much on pupils who have exceeded even the most challenging targets. This will be the focus of future teacher development. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils are well supported to make progress in line with their peers. During COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, you ensured that as many of these pupils as possible benefited from attending school regularly.

You have established a school-wide initiative to change the way pupils and teachers think about learning. You want pupils to take more responsibility for their learning and how to learn from their mistakes. This strategy is paying off. Pupils are more engaged in their learning. In mathematics, even the youngest pupils enthusiastically discuss the challenges teachers set and how to solve them. Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving. Many pupils now ask for more work to complete at home or bring into school extra work they have completed at home.

At the time of the last inspection, pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to complete written tasks in subjects other than English. To address this, you carried out a review of writing opportunities across the curriculum. Pupils now have more opportunities to complete extended writing tasks in topic lessons. In history, for example, pupils write letters home from the point of view of soldiers during the Second World War. Teachers are clear that they expect high standards of grammar, punctuation and spelling in all pupils' writing. Subject leaders check pupils' books to ensure that the intended curriculum is being covered. Subject leaders have devised progression maps to help teachers see more easily how well pupils are getting on. They have not yet had a chance to see how effectively these help to move learning forwards.

Reading has a high profile in the school. A new, more structured, approach to the teaching of texts in English is bearing fruit. When teachers introduce a new book to the class, they now spend more time explaining key vocabulary and the context of the story. This helps pupils to understand the book and to immerse themselves in the story. Pupils read books that are now more carefully chosen to match their prior learning, interests and, where appropriate, the theme of the topic lessons. For example, pupils have read 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas' to coincide with their study of the Second World War. Teachers acknowledge that this book raises challenging issues, but they say that this helped to bring to life pupils' study of the Second World War. Work in pupils' books shows this to be the case.

You have identified that many pupils start school with weak language skills. Teachers start addressing this from early years upwards. In their spelling books, pupils have lists of words covering different topics each week. This helps to extend their vocabulary. In topic lessons, pupils are taught the key words for each subject. However, this is not consistently the case in all subjects.

Governors know the school well. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. They are supportive of leaders. They have correctly identified that leaders' monitoring of the curriculum has been key to the progress that has been made so far. They know that the school has come a long way since the previous inspection to improve the quality of education in the school, but they share your ambitions to improve further.

In your school improvement plan you have identified the correct priorities and actions that should bring about the improvements needed. The areas for improvement from the previous inspection are being tackled effectively. You have ensured that teachers and

governors understand and support the changes you are trying to achieve. While this is an on-going process, you have ensured that the school is on the right track. Evidence of the impact of leaders' actions are clear. Around the school, pupils behave well and focus on learning. Teachers and support staff focus on what is best for the pupils. Parents and carers appreciate the way the school welcomes and supports children from far and wide.

Additional support

The school has embraced the support offered by the local authority commissioned support provider. Staff work effectively with the local mathematics hub school. Leaders are keen to learn from the best and, in turn, are happy to share the good practice in their own school. The SEND co-ordinator (SENCo) provides support to new SENCos in other schools in the area, for example.

Teachers have benefited from working with colleagues in other schools to moderate their assessments of pupils' work. Although this has not happened during COVID-19, teachers from different classes have moderated pupils' work together.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the headteacher. I also met with other senior leaders and staff, the chair of the governing body and the chair of the governors' curriculum committee, and a representative of the local authority commissioned support provider to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons with the deputy headteacher, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils in lessons. I met with the SENCo, the designated safeguarding leader, the English leader and subject leaders for modern foreign languages, history and geography.

I reviewed documents such as the school evaluation and the improvement plan. I reviewed curriculum plans and policies on the school's website.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Spilsbury
Her Majesty's Inspector