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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Scott Halliwell
Headteacher
Southwood Primary School
Keppel Road
Dagenham
Essex
RM9 5LT

Dear Mr Halliwell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Southwood Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 and has taken place because the school has received a judgement of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspection.

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:

- ensure that leaders identify the key knowledge that they want pupils to learn in subjects such as geography and history

- put in place strategies to check what pupils know and remember
- further develop approaches to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so that all pupils can access the full curriculum.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the staff team has remained stable. New subject leaders have been appointed, and an existing member of staff has taken up the role of special educational needs coordinator.

Main findings

Leaders' work to secure improvements is having a positive impact. Expectations for all pupils, including those with SEND, have been raised. You and your team have also taken effective steps to develop staff's expertise in teaching the curriculum. Training for staff, including in phonics, means that staff are better able to support pupils' learning.

You have also developed and strengthened the leadership team. All leaders understand their roles and responsibilities in securing improvements. Some of your team are new to these leadership roles. You are supporting these staff well, and making sure that they have the expertise to develop and train other staff.

Since the previous inspection, you and your leadership team have reviewed the curriculum for each subject. Typically, subject leaders are now clearer about the essential knowledge that pupils will need to succeed and learn well. This work is not as developed in geography and history as it is in other subjects. Nevertheless, leaders are at the early stages of setting out what they expect pupils to know and remember in history and geography.

Plans for English and mathematics are clear, with careful thought given to helping pupils to increase their knowledge progressively. Leaders know where gaps in pupils' understanding and knowledge are. In some subjects, however, assessment approaches do not enable pupils to fully demonstrate what they have learned and how this has developed over time.

Leaders have further developed a structured and well-planned curriculum for reading. This has raised the profile of reading in the school. Pupils enjoyed talking to me about their favourite books and authors. They said that they enjoy reading. Leaders are also taking effective steps to develop other aspects of the English curriculum, including writing. The changes you have made mean that pupils are building up and applying their understanding of grammar, as well as different styles of writing.

The physical education curriculum has been reviewed and adapted following the COVID-19 restrictions. Pupils like the renewed opportunities they have to take part in competitions. The new leadership team is also generating a renewed enthusiasm for

teaching the well-planned curriculum for phonics and mathematics. Training for staff has increased their confidence, for instance in selecting resources which help pupils to learn and remember essential knowledge. Pupils' learning in phonics and mathematics is assessed carefully. Pupils who fall behind are supported through regular, additional help. Similarly, pupils with SEND receive a range of support. There are times, however, that this support means pupils miss out on learning alongside their peers in the classroom. Leaders are currently reviewing how they organise and provide additional support. They understand the importance of all pupils having access to the same curriculum.

Additional support

Leaders have benefited from a range of support and guidance from the local authority. For example, local authority advisers have helped leaders to obtain an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and identify the right priorities for improvement. You and your team continue to work closely with the local authority to refine improvement plans and evaluate the impact of your actions. Leaders have also drawn on expertise and experience from within a local network of schools to inform their decisions on how to develop the curriculum. Governors make effective use of the information from the local authority to help check on the progress of leaders.

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 also looked at evidence on how the curriculum has been developed and how it is being taught. I visited lessons, including in mathematics and reading, and looked at a range of pupils' work. I considered 33 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and spoke with parents and carers before school.

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

Yours sincerely

Adam Vincent
Her Majesty's Inspector