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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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Mrs Laura Fielding
Headteacher
Spring Meadow Infant School
High Barns
Ely
Cambridgeshire
CB7 4RB

Dear Mrs Fielding

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Spring Meadow Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 19 May 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 two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the second 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:

The school continues to require improvement. Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action toward the school becoming a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- increase the number of pupils who are able to read fluently and understand number. The previous reading and mathematics programmes have not prepared some pupils well for the next stage of their education. Leaders must ensure all staff are given

sufficient and timely training in how to use the new systematic phonics programme and ensure pupils access activities and books that support them to catch up and achieve well. Additionally, leaders must also ensure that pupils who have fallen behind in their mathematics are given effective additional targeted support to catch up quickly

- ensure children in the Nursery and Reception Years are being prepared well for learning in Year 1 and beyond. In addition to designing a sequenced curriculum that prepares pupils well for key stage 1, leaders must ensure that staff are trained to deliver the new curriculum to ensure children successfully learn and remember more.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes to the senior leadership team and to the overall staffing of the school. The current headteacher has been in post since February 2022.

The chair of governors took up the post shortly after the previous inspection. Since then, four new governors have been appointed and two governors have left.

Due to a falling roll, the school has changed from three-form to two-form entry.

The school still has an infant assessment unit for pupils with autism spectrum disorder and/or speech language and communication needs. However, the remit of the unit has recently changed back to a short-term assessment placement rather than a specialist resourced provision.

Main findings

Since the current headteacher took up post earlier this year, leaders have set in motion the changes needed to improve the quality of education. School leaders acknowledge that, previously, improvement was not focused on or addressed with enough urgency.

The previous inspection found that pupils were not learning, understanding or remembering enough of the curriculum. This was because, in most subjects, the curriculum content was not well thought through to ensure pupils achieved well. Since then, leaders have introduced a new curriculum for science and the foundation subjects. The new curriculum identifies what is needed to be learned at each stage for pupils to be successful. Pupils in key stage 1 are benefiting from the delivery of the new curriculum. Teachers adapt the plans to meet the needs of pupils. They also help pupils to remember what is taught by frequently revisiting previously taught content.

The previous inspection identified that pupils' basic writing skills, including spelling, were not being developed well enough. Furthermore, many pupils had fallen behind in their reading and had not been provided with the correct books or activities to help them catch up quickly enough. As a result, too many pupils were not able to read or spell well enough to access the next stage of education.

Leaders have accurately identified what needs to be done to improve. They are ensuring extra teaching sessions are in place to support pupils who have fallen behind in reading and mathematics. Additionally, staff are receiving training to implement the reviewed curriculum. This work is starting to make a difference to how well pupils achieve and in ensuring teachers are confidently able to deliver the curriculum leaders intend.

At the time of the previous inspection, too many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were not achieving well. Subsequently, leaders have provided further training and support for staff, so that they can better support pupils with SEND in the classroom. As a result, the majority of pupils with SEND are accessing the same curriculum as their peers and are experiencing more success.

Leaders have identified that the curriculum for children in the early years has not been ambitious enough and expectations and outcomes have been too low. For example, children tend to remember activities rather than knowledge and skills. This is because the curriculum set out the activities that children would do. It did not set out the important knowledge that pupils need to learn about. Leaders have improved the environment in Nursery and have reviewed and designed a curriculum that teachers are delivering which is starting to prepare pupils better for key stage 1.

Since the previous inspection, the governing body has refined its knowledge and understanding of high-quality education. This is helping governors to challenge leaders and develops ways to regularly monitor the impact of leaders' actions to improve the school. Governors are asking probing questions and holding leaders to account to ensure that the quality of education continues to improve.

Additional support

Since September 2020 several local authority advisors, alongside a local leader of education, have provided leaders with both support and challenge on leadership and curriculum design. The current leaders have used this advice well to plan and act upon improvements needed across the school. Plans are in place for this support to continue.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the headteacher. I also met with 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 visited lessons, checked the single central record, and looked at the provision for pupils with SEND and safeguarding documents. I looked at a range of pupils' work and looked at the school development plan, and governing board minutes.

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

Yours sincerely

Isabel Davis
Her Majesty's Inspector