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Dear Mr Guest

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sir Edmund Hillary Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 22 July 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.

Context

There has been a reduction in the number of pupils on roll. You have combined the Year 5 and 6 classes. This has led to larger class sizes in these year groups. Consequently, you have reviewed aspects of the curriculum for these pupils, including how reading is taught.

There have been several significant staff absences since the previous inspection in September 2021. Some of these absences were related to the pandemic. These absences have meant that you have had to lead on most of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

There have been some changes to the external support that the school receives. The local authority education improvement adviser changed the term before the previous inspection. The current adviser has been working closely with you since September.

Leaders have noted that the quality of pupils' writing has been impacted by the pandemic. They feel that pupils' writing stamina has regressed.

Main findings

Senior leaders are taking decisive steps to improve the quality of education. They have rightly focused on prioritising improvements in early reading. They are using external support to help review the school's curriculum. This has had a particular focus on developing reading across the school.

Leaders have introduced a new systematic synthetic phonics programme. All staff have been trained to deliver this. Staff who deliver interventions have accessed additional training. All staff who were observed using the phonics programme, delivered it consistently. They modelled sounds correctly in lessons. They used the same techniques for segmenting and blending words. However, not all staff picked up on pupils' mispronunciation of words. Some teachers moved onto a new word before ensuring that all pupils could confidently read the previous one.

Leaders have introduced an additional daily phonics session. In this session, pupils work with teachers on specific sounds identified through assessment. Assessments are accurate. These sessions, along with individual interventions, are having a positive impact. Pupils who are behind are catching up with their peers.

Leaders have purchased new decodable reading books that match the phonics programme. Pupils are now reading books that are well matched to the sounds that they have learned.

Leaders have reviewed how reading, beyond phonics, is taught. The previous approach was not working well in some key stage 2 classes. Leaders have worked with another school to introduce a new approach to group reading. Leaders used the support from the local authority to accurately evaluate their plans for this proposed change. The new four-stage approach to group reading is well organised. In some of the lessons visited, it was

clear that pupils were benefiting from the new structure. Pupils were seen using effective methods to investigate a text in order to draw out important facts. The approach is starting to address some of the weaknesses seen in reading across the school. However, this new approach to group reading is in the very early stages of implementation.

Leaders' work to improve the curriculum, particularly within foundation subjects, is at an early stage. Some of the weaknesses in the curriculum that were identified at the last inspection remain. Leaders have prioritised developing new medium-term planning for science and geography. However, the issues around the sequencing of learning in the long-term plans have not been addressed. For example, in science, pupils study electricity before they have encountered useful prior knowledge that will help them understand this topic.

Leaders have not thought carefully enough about how pupils will demonstrate that they are getting better at science and geography. They have not identified the subject-specific knowledge pupils need. Many of the plans are incomplete. There is not enough guidance given to teachers to ensure they can deliver all the requirements of the national curriculum. For example, in geography, the curriculum does not match the expectations of the national curriculum in key stage one.

Pupils speak enthusiastically about their learning during topic time. However, many were confused about the subjects they were studying in these lessons. Only one pupil was able to tell the inspector that geography 'had something to do other places'. Senior leaders acknowledge that there is more to be done to ensure that pupils understand which subjects they are learning.

Governors are well informed about the changes that leaders have implemented. They are committed to further improving the quality of education.

Additional support

Leaders have benefitted greatly from the external support to improve the delivery of phonics. The support, training and rigorous evaluation of the school's provision has enabled staff to confidently deliver a cohesive phonics programme.

The local authority has provided support and challenge. They evaluated the school's development plan and advised leaders to concentrate on fewer actions that will have the biggest impact on improving the quality of education provided.

Senior leaders and governors agree that staff need more support and training to plan and sequence the curriculum. Governors require additional training to enable them to fully hold leaders to account for the quality of education.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, and staff who have responsibility for the curriculum. I held a meeting with five governors, including the chair. I held a telephone conversation with the local authority representative to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I discussed the curriculum with teachers of early reading, English, science and geography, as well as meeting with a teaching assistant who leads reading intervention sessions. I reviewed a sample of pupils' work. I spoke with two groups of pupils and heard some pupils read to an adult.

I scrutinised a range of documents, including senior leaders' evaluations of the school's work and their plans to improve the school. I reviewed a range of planning documents provided by leaders. I considered minutes relating to the school's governance and some recent reviews of the school carried out by the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Dave Gilkerson
Her Majesty's Inspector