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Miss Lynne Wales
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Dear Miss Wales

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of South Street Community Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 17 May 2023, on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, governors and the local authority the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also spoke to subject leaders, viewed books, carried out visits to lessons, spoke with other staff and pupils and reviewed a range of documentation, including the single central record. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

South Street Community Primary School continues to require improvement. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

Main findings

There have been some changes to staffing since the last inspection. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2022. The Nursery teacher, a class teacher and the early years leader have resigned. Leaders are in the process of appointing an early years leader. In addition, there is a new office manager, office administrator and two new teaching assistants in post. Governors are aware of the impact that this has had on the progress the school has made. During this inspection, I focused on the quality of education, the behaviour of pupils and personal development.

You have correctly revised the curriculum for foundation curriculum subjects. Geography, history and art have been your priority. You have given great thought to how these subjects are planned, based on the local area. The exact knowledge you want pupils to know and remember is identified and ordered in a logical way. Key concepts, such as teaching pupils about artefacts, are repeated throughout the topics and year groups. Pupils know what these terms are. You continue to develop other subjects in this way, such as science and religious education.

Subject leaders plan regular enrichment experiences that complement and support learning. For example, pupils in Year 6 listen carefully to an external visitor from the university. Pupils can compare what they have learned in previous lessons about medieval medicine with what they are learning about new technological advances.

Pupils benefit from these improvements that you and curriculum leaders have made to the curriculum since the last inspection. They enjoy their lessons, understand what they are learning and can talk about this in great depth. For example, pupils in Year 2 can clearly explain that George Stephenson built train tracks and locomotives. However, some older pupils struggle to remember what they have learned last year. Leaders know that the curriculum needs time to embed. You are looking for further opportunities to develop how you assess what pupils remember in the wider curriculum subjects.

While you have made significant improvements to the wider curriculum, plans do not start from the early years. Early years is an area that you are prioritising. However, your plans to make rapid change to ensure that children in the early years receive a consistent and high-quality provision have been delayed due to turbulence in staffing. You are currently addressing this.

You set clear expectations of all staff to provide an education of the highest quality for all pupils. Teachers use the improved curriculum plans effectively. They use appropriate activities to deliver interesting lessons that do not detract from the content that they want pupils to remember.

Over the last year, your focus on improving the wider opportunities for pupils to engage in has been significant. There has been an increase in the number of lunchtime and after-school activities on offer to pupils. These include clubs such as cookery, chill and chat, drums, library, games club and water colour club. You ensure that there are a range of

opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills. Since the last inspection, you have created ambassador roles, such as reading, English and mathematics ambassadors. Ambassadors love their roles. They enjoy helping others. Furthermore, you have recently established a school council. School councillors meet regularly. Pupils feel that the school council makes a difference.

You have adopted a published scheme for your personal, social and health education curriculum. While pupils receive these lessons, they are not specific to the local context and pupils' needs. Pupils have an understanding of respect and responsibility. However, they have limited understanding of fundamental British values and the main world faiths. You continue to develop this.

You have made rapid and significant improvements since the last inspection. You have prioritised the right things at the right time. This is because governors and leaders know what needs to improve and when. Governors regularly challenge leaders on the effectiveness and speed with which improvements are made. This challenge is equally matched by the officers from the local authority.

The improvements you have made have not been restricted to the curriculum and personal development but also include pupils' behaviour, attendance and the learning environment. Areas in the playground, including the forest school, are continuing to be developed. There is now a new library where pupils enjoy free access to books that they can read for pleasure. You have implemented a new behaviour policy which has been applied consistently across school. Everyone knows your high expectations. This is reflected in pupils' improved behaviour. Pupils play well together during breaktime and lunchtimes. They are polite and courteous to one another and visitors. They are motivated to learn and have high levels of concentration during lessons. In addition, attendance has improved since the last inspection.

You value the range of support from the local authority. The local authority officers know the school's strengths and areas for development well and offer tailored support to help you become a good school. Your subject leaders benefit from curriculum support and access to network meetings, where clusters of schools meet within the local authority to share good practice. In addition, you value the support for early years and leaders.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Gateshead local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Thomas
His Majesty's Inspector