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Claire Collett
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Dear Mrs Collett

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of The Fourfields Church of England School, Sutterton

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 27 September 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.

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's overall effectiveness, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and the head of school who is also the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator (SENCo), the leader responsible for early years provision, the vice-chair of governors and a representative from 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 met with subject leaders responsible for maths, physical education and English, visited lessons, met with groups of pupils, visited the early years setting, observed social times and met formally and informally with members of staff. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes to staff in leadership positions. The current head of school took up their post in January 2023. In September 2023, they also took on the role of SENCo. The leader responsible for early years provision started to work at the school in September 2022. A member of staff has been appointed as a leader with responsibility for overseeing behaviour.

The school has a well-sequenced curriculum in place. Teachers know when pupils should learn particular knowledge and skills as they study the curriculum. Teachers have secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. They regularly check pupils' understanding. On occasion, teachers do not focus as explicitly as they could on important knowledge. Many pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), remember what they have studied in different subjects. Some pupils' recall of prior learning is less secure.

Reading is prioritised. Staff complete training specific to the phonics scheme the school has adopted. They also work with leaders and external experts to develop their practice in relation to teaching pupils to read. Pupils develop their ability to read accurately. They do not always read as fluently as they could. Some teachers and teaching assistants do not always model for pupils the skills of reading fluently. Teaching assistants form positive relationships with pupils and often provide effective support, such as questioning pupils about the books they read to check their comprehension. At times, teaching assistants do not use effective strategies to help pupils develop their ability to identify sounds and read words.

At the time of the previous inspection, children in the early years did not consistently benefit from tasks that supported their learning. The school has ensured that the curriculum identifies precisely what children should know and be able to do at each point throughout the Reception year. Staff use this curriculum to plan activities which help children to build their knowledge. Children learn about the seasons, for example through a variety of adult-led and independent tasks. At times, staff do not always check that the helpful advice they are sharing is leading to children learning and remembering more.

New procedures are in place to review the quality of the school's provision. All staff receive 'foundations of best practice'. These are intended to ensure that staff understand what is expected of them, including in terms of teaching pupils to read and of managing behaviour. Staff receive information about when training and review processes will take place throughout the academic year.

Staff complete training, including in relation to the subjects they teach, curriculum thinking in a small school setting and supporting pupils with SEND. Staff share positive views about the personalised approaches that leaders take to catering for their workload and well-being.

Leaders have time to monitor the subjects through lesson visits and reviewing samples of pupils' work. They use the information gathered as part of reviews to identify priorities and introduce strategies. For example, pupils' reading fluency was identified as an area for development, and a new approach and resources to help pupils develop this skill have been introduced. Leaders' strategies are having a positive impact on pupils' education and their experience of school. Some strategies are in their early stages and, as such, have not yet been reviewed.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were challenged to check with greater rigour the attendance of pupils who were persistently absent. They have responded well to this challenge. The school has clear systems in place to check attendance. There are now clear steps the school follows when individual pupils' attendance falls below their high expectations. Attendance has improved. In general, pupils attend well.

Most younger pupils and children in the early years behave calmly and focus on their learning. Staff consistently use behaviour strategies to help pupils manage their behaviour. They develop positive relationships with pupils and use their language carefully to help pupils to stay calm and make sensible choices. The school has plans to strengthen further those behaviour systems which have already had a positive impact since the time of the previous inspection.

The school has worked extensively with external partners. Leaders value the support the local authority provided to review the quality of their provision. Staff have acted on suggestions to make improvements, such as ensuring that the early years curriculum helps prepare children for key stage 1. The school has commissioned reviews of its provision for pupils with SEND and the teaching of reading. Leaders seek out opportunities to learn from best practice and to develop the quality of education.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of governors the director of education for the Diocese of Lincoln, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Fearn-Davies
His Majesty's Inspector