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Jonathan Farrington
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Dear Mr Farrington

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Talbot First School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 16 November 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 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 looked at curriculum planning, visited lessons, met with three groups of pupils, looked at pupils' books, met with a group of staff and spoke with parents and carers at the end of the school day. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Talbot First School continues to require improvement. Leaders have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

The school should take further action to:

- support staff to use formative assessment effectively to check pupils' understanding of what they are learning and adapt their teaching if required
- ensure that pupils consistently take a pride in their work.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, there has been turbulence in leadership and staffing, which has led to periods of instability. The instability in leadership and staffing has impacted on your ability to improve the quality of education for pupils in the school. As interim headteacher, you have been in post since December 2022.

With the support of your subject leaders, you have gone back to the drawing board to redesign the curriculum in a wide range of subjects. In many subjects, leaders have clearly mapped out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils will learn from early years to Year 4. However, in some subjects, the knowledge and skills that pupils will learn are not as clear.

Staff are not using formative assessment effectively to check whether pupils have understood what they have been taught. As a result, pupils' misconceptions are not being routinely identified and addressed. In addition, you and your leaders are not ensuring that learning activities and the choice of learning resources are well matched to the needs of some pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

With the support of your subject leaders, you have ensured that work in pupils' English books covers spelling, punctuation and grammar, as well as opportunities for sustained pieces of writing. However, there is evidence of pupils from different year groups completing identical work that is not matched to their needs. Also, too many pupils do not take a pride in their written work.

You have timetabled opportunities for subject leaders to monitor and make checks on how well their subject is being delivered in the classroom. Your intention is that subject leaders will use their findings to develop their subject area further.

You and your leaders have introduced a new religious education curriculum in Years 3 and 4. The new curriculum focuses predominantly on Christianity and Islam to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding of these faiths. You intend to roll this out for younger pupils in due course. Nonetheless, pupils continue to have a very limited knowledge of faiths and cultures that are different from their own. What they do remember is often confused.

With support from you and your leaders, the governing body has a clear understanding of curriculum design. However, its understanding of how well the curriculum is being delivered is more limited. This is partly because its focus has been on finance, staffing and the proposed academisation process. However, governors have established a curriculum committee, which they believe will facilitate a greater understanding of the curriculum and its impact on how well pupils achieve. With your support, governors now have a developing understanding of their strategic role in the school.

You and your staff have developed strong relationships with parents over time. As a result, parents are very positive about the school. They comment that the school has a

'family feel' and they appreciate the caring nature of your staff. Many parents commented about the positive changes that have taken place since you became the interim headteacher. Also, they appreciate the visibility and approachability of staff, as well as improvements in communication.

Staff say that they enjoy working in the school. They say that everyone works as part of a team. Teachers feel supported by teaching assistants and vice versa. However, staff recognise that the instability and inconsistency in leadership and staffing have had an impact on their role and on the quality of education that pupils receive.

You appreciate the support you receive from the local authority in relation to safeguarding and the curriculum. You and your leaders have also benefited from leadership support from the other school in the federation, particularly in relation to the development of the curriculum. The special educational needs coordinator, who is employed through an external agency, has focused on developing systems and procedures to support provision for pupils with SEND, which are understood by staff.

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 Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Wayne Simner
His Majesty's Inspector