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Rachel Pattison  
Executive headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Pattison

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Countess Wear Community School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 30 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, 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 visited lessons, listened to pupils read, met with teachers, looked at examples of pupils' work and scrutinised documentation about school improvement and safeguarding. 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

The school is now in a period of stability following significant changes in staffing and leadership that took place at the point of the previous inspection and in the subsequent 10 months. You have re-structured and increased the size of the school leadership team. School leaders have clear areas of responsibility. These include special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learning and curriculum.

Since the previous inspection, you have prioritised the development of reading. The school has ensured that all staff have the knowledge and expertise to teach phonics well. As a result, pupils read with growing confidence and fluency. Teachers carefully check pupils' knowledge of sounds and help them to catch up when needed. You provide a wide range of reading experiences for pupils. Older pupils say that they enjoy reading and do so regularly. You have taken actions to strengthen reading for older pupils, such as targeting more precise support where it is needed. However, you know that further work is needed to see the impact of the actions that have been taken.

The school has re-worked the design of the wider curriculum, mathematics and science. There is now a coherent, long-term overview for the subjects. This has been carefully considered to meet pupils' needs. The school has broken the content down to support teachers to know what to teach and when, in more detail. The needs of pupils with SEND have been well considered in the redesign. This has informed the approach to assessment so that the school gets the information it needs to inform next steps in learning and further curriculum development. Some of this work is still in its infancy and the impact is not fully apparent. However, early indicators, such as work in books, teacher feedback and pupils' recall, are positive.

Governors are knowledgeable about what the steps the school has taken and why to bring about improvement. They have challenged and supported leaders effectively to ensure that changes are making the necessary impact on the education that pupils receive. You, along with your school leadership team and governors, have identified what support staff need to implement the changes effectively. Where it has been appropriate, you have capitalised on liaising with other curriculum leaders in the federation. Staff and pupils are positive about the changes the school has undergone.

You rightly prioritised improvements to the curriculum. However, you have recognised that other aspects of pupils' experience of school needed enhancing. You have made sure that there is a well-communicated and fully understood approach to behaviour. Staff and pupils know this and what is expected of them. However, this shift in culture requires some further understanding among pupils about the different needs pupils have and how these are met in different ways. The school is alert to this. You and your staff are working to strengthen awareness of this through assemblies and pupils' learning in different areas in class and beyond the academic curriculum.

The school has received support from the provider of the systematic synthetic phonics programme it has adopted and the local English hub to improve the reading curriculum.

This has been valuable in establishing the baseline and precision for where support was needed. Ongoing support and guidance from the English hub, the phonics programme provider and the school improvement partner has ensured that leaders keep up-to-date with current practice and can support staff with confidence.

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

Yours sincerely

Leanne Thirlby  
**His Majesty's Inspector**