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Dear Mrs Grimsey

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Westbury Leigh CofE Primary School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 23 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 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 an executive leader from the multi-academy trust who is supporting the school, two representatives from the local authority, groups of staff, pupils and governors. In addition, I also carried out a small number of lesson visits, scrutinised curriculum plans, looked at pupils' work in English, mathematics, science, geography and religious education (RE) and scrutinised the school's plans for improvement and monitoring reports. 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, a small number of teachers have left. Staff absence has significantly reduced. Staffing is now more stable. This has helped to give pupils a more settled education. Due to an anticipated fall in roll, the school moved to mixed-age classes at key stage 2 from September 2023. The school received its Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools in May 2023 and acquired a judgement of good.

During the monitoring visit, I focused particularly on the school's areas for improvement from the 2022 inspection. Namely, the quality of education, communication with parents and leadership and management.

The school has carried out a considerable amount of work on improving the wider curriculum since the previous inspection. Due to weak published key stage 2 outcomes in English and mathematics in 2023, the school has wisely chosen to widen out this improvement work to include these subjects. It has further revised its plans in subjects such as history and geography. These plans identify precisely the knowledge that pupils should learn. This helps teachers to closely match their teaching to what pupils need to know. The school has identified the subject knowledge that teachers need to know, in order to teach concepts well. As a result, teachers are beginning to more confidently and more effectively implement the curriculum.

However, due to the changes being recent, the impact on pupils' learning is limited. Pupils' recall of much of what they have learned is still patchy. For example, in RE, pupils cannot recall their knowledge of world faiths. They struggle to talk about their learning in history in sufficient depth. The school also knows that subject specific vocabulary remains a barrier to pupils fully understanding and remembering their learning.

There are, though, some signs of success. Pupils talk about how the new approach to writing helps them to understand how to write well. This is because teachers break the learning down into small steps. In science, pupils are showing signs of increased understanding of what they have learned. Teachers plan tasks that sufficiently deepen their knowledge. Therefore, pupils are building on their learning more effectively over time.

The school has developed its systems for checking what pupils know. It has closely linked this to the knowledge it expects pupils to learn. In lessons, teachers are starting to plan for pupils to recap on their prior learning. Consequently, they check how well pupils have learned and build on their previous learning. Again, some of this work is in its infancy.

The school's plans for improvement are precise and measurable. This means that leaders, including governors, are clear about where the school is on its improvement journey. They know what needs to improve further. Governors use the external reports on the school's work to support and challenge the school effectively. They know pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 are still too low.

Many subject leaders are new to their role. However, they have made a solid start in driving forward improvements in their subjects. This is because the school has ensured that they are well trained. Subject leaders are beginning to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects through their own checks. For example, the school has readjusted its approach to the teaching of mathematics to meet the needs of the key stage 2 mixed-age classes. Nevertheless, much of this work is at an early stage.

The school has sought to improve its communication with parents and carers through its electronic system. Coupled with this, more stable staffing has meant that systems for communication with parents are better understood and timelier. Questionnaires show that parents' views on the school are more positive. However, governors require further involvement with this process, in order to better hold leaders to account for these outcomes.

The school has used external support highly effectively. The local authority has commissioned a multi-academy trust to carry out much of the school improvement work. The school has embraced this. For example, it uses the trust's documentation to help track its progress. Furthermore, the school has used this support to help establish agreed systems of how best to teach the curriculum. Staff speak highly of this training. They appreciate meeting with other schools to share good practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Jason Edge
His Majesty's Inspector