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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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Ailsa Boardman-Hirst
Headteacher
Stower Provost Community School
Woodville Stour Provost
Gillingham
Dorset
SP8 5LX

Dear Mrs Boardman-Hirst

Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Stower Provost Community School

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 11 June 2024, 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 three 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, other staff, 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 phonics lessons, met with subject leaders and carried out a work scrutiny. 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 last inspection, there has been some unavoidable instability in staffing. You have managed this well, keeping a sharp focus on the quality of education. As a result, the school has made significant improvements to the curriculum.

The school has rightly focused on improving the reading curriculum. It has implemented a well-sequenced phonics programme. This has had an impressive impact on pupils across the school. Staff assessed every pupil in the school before implementing the programme. This identified gaps in phonics knowledge for any pupil, regardless of age. By matching each pupil to the programme, the vast majority of key stage 2 pupils have secured the knowledge they were missing. Younger children have moved through the programme at the expected rate. They are confident segmenting words and blending sounds. Pupils read with accuracy and fluency.

In the wider curriculum, the school has identified the key knowledge it wants pupils to learn. This is coherently sequenced so that pupils build on what they already know. This enables meaningful assessment of knowledge. There is still some work to do to ensure the school's identified 'sticky knowledge' is precise in all subject curriculums. This will strengthen the design work already done. Pupils produce high-quality work across the curriculum. This shows the impact of the school's raised expectations of pupils. For example, in design technology, Year 2 pupils had made basic items of clothing. They used different stitches and tools, including sewing machines, to create these. The challenge for the school is to close gaps in knowledge for older pupils who have not experienced this stretching curriculum.

Subject leadership has developed into a strong position. Subject leaders evaluate the implementation of the curriculum. Currently, the focus is to ensure the knowledge and skills are implemented as leaders intend. The school knows the next step is to identify the teaching strategies that will help all pupils learn well.

Governors have improved the effectiveness of their work. Governors have a strong, corporate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Changes to the information-gathering activities have helped this. This understanding enables them to prioritise the right items for discussion. They ask pertinent questions to challenge and support. They have expanded the range of staff they gather their information from. This has made staff feel valued and included in the improvement journey.

The school has made good use of external support to develop its understanding of curriculum design and sequencing. This support has developed the school's ability to evaluate the implementation and impact of curriculum developments.

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

Yours sincerely

Angela Folland
His Majesty's Inspector