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Sandra Pope
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Dear Miss Pope

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Westfield Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 May 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- ensure that curriculum plans set out clearly what pupils are expected to know and remember, and the order in which new knowledge should be learned
- ensure that teachers who have leadership responsibility receive further training and support to carry out their roles

- ensure that pupils' attendance continues to improve.

Context

Following the previous section 5 inspection in September 2019, the governing body appointed you as the interim headteacher. You were appointed as the substantive headteacher in September 2020.

Main findings

Since you have taken up the substantive role as headteacher at Westfield Primary School, you and other leaders have accurately identified the key actions required to improve the school. Your plans are detailed and clear. They reflect the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Staff and governors now understand their roles in bringing about the necessary improvements. Governors have begun to check that key actions from the improvement plan are on track to be completed. They are asking increasingly probing questions to ensure that these actions are bringing about the required improvements to the quality of education for pupils. That said, there have been some delays to school improvement as a result of the impact of the pandemic and the delays in recruiting a headteacher.

Since the previous inspection, you have successfully ensured that there is a more consistent approach to the teaching of reading and writing for older pupils. For example, in key stage 2, pupils' reading knowledge has improved considerably. These pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of what they have read. The quality of pupils' writing in Years 5 and 6 has also improved. Older pupils are successfully transferring their learning in reading and writing to other subjects.

While pupils in Years 5 and 6 have undoubtedly benefited from an improved reading and writing curriculum, there is more work to do lower down the school. For example, staff training to develop consistency in the teaching of reading to younger pupils has been delayed. Nevertheless, you have appropriate plans in place to deliver this training and to improve younger pupils' reading knowledge.

Following the previous inspection, governors delayed appointing a permanent headteacher due to restrictions as a result of the pandemic. This meant that some critical improvements to curriculum planning were temporarily stalled by the instability in senior leadership. Across the school, some curriculum plans do not help teachers to identify the essential knowledge that pupils must learn. They are not precise enough. Some curriculum plans do not pay sufficient attention to the order in which new knowledge must be learned from the Reception Year to Year 6. Since your appointment as the permanent headteacher, you, other leaders and governors now understand the urgency of ensuring that all curriculum plans contain the key knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. Recently, the action required to address the weakness in curriculum planning has got underway.

Although you are now taking action to improve the curriculum, you have found that there is some unevenness in subject leaders' understanding of how to develop an appropriate curriculum. This is because leadership across the school is at an early stage of development.

Despite some curriculum plans being underdeveloped, you have made effective use of the checks that teachers make with regard to what pupils know and remember since March 2020. You are prioritising the support that pupils need to catch up as a result of the pandemic, especially in reading and writing. That said, in some other subject areas, such as science, some pupils continue to have missing knowledge.

You have taken decisive action to improve pupils' rates of attendance at school. That said, there are still some pupils who do not attend school consistently well.

Additional support

You, other leaders and governors have made effective use of the support on offer from the local authority and from colleagues in other schools. This support has strengthened senior leaders' understanding of the key actions required to improve the school, including how to improve the quality of the reading and writing curriculums. The support that you and other leaders have received has ensured that you remain focused on improving the quality of education that pupils receive.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I looked at the documents that you provided, including records of the meetings of the governing body, curriculum plans and your school improvement plans. In addition, I checked samples of pupils' work. I heard pupils read. I considered the 36 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 18 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Halton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Cropper
Her Majesty's Inspector