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Jane Bamber
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Dear Miss Bamber

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Osmotherley Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 three 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.

The school should take action to:

- further improve the teaching of early reading, so that staff follow the school's chosen phonics programme with confidence and consistency
- identify and sequence effectively the substantive and disciplinary knowledge pupils should know and remember across all subjects.

Context

Since the last inspection, one governor has left the governing body. A replacement teacher in early years was appointed in June 2020.

You report that COVID-19 has slowed the pace of school improvement. Curriculum leaders have paused the planned curriculum so that staff can identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding following the period of COVID-19 restrictions. Currently, teaching is focused on helping pupils catch up on any lost learning. You intend to introduce new curriculum plans after the forthcoming summer holidays.

You have used some of the COVID-19 catch-up premium to appoint additional staff in key stage 2. This has allowed you to split the mixed-age key stage 2 class into two groups: one including pupils from Years 3 and 4 and another including pupils from Years 5 and 6.

All pupils and staff have returned to school. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils or staff self-isolating due to COVID-19.

Main findings

You responded swiftly and with enthusiasm following the last section 5 inspection in September 2019. Changes to the early reading curriculum were introduced the day after the inspection. Teachers now follow one phonics programme with fidelity. Children who start Reception in September now learn letter–sound correspondences in their first few weeks at school. This is helping staff identify the children who need early reading support quickly. You have invested extensively in phonically decodable reading books, so that pupils can read and re-read books that match their phonic knowledge. All staff have received appropriate early reading training. This is helping to ensure that pupils learn how to read in the same way. However, there remains some variation in how teachers support the weakest readers in class and when pupils read to staff.

Leaders and staff have drawn on comprehensive support from colleagues at a local teaching school alliance and discussed plans to improve the curriculum with staff from a nearby secondary school. Curriculum leaders are beginning to consider what pupils should learn and when. Consequently, curriculum plans across most subjects have been amended since the previous inspection. However, the quality and detail of curriculum plans vary. Many curriculum plans continue to be based on assessment objectives or curriculum end points and not on the subject knowledge that each pupil should know inside out. There is still much work to do to ensure that curriculum leaders pinpoint what it is they want pupils to learn and in what order.

Staff have been proactive in searching for and accessing training to develop their subject expertise. They have joined professional associations, attended virtual subject network meetings and participated in subject-focused training for example,

linked to music, dance and tennis. Staff say that they feel more confident when teaching different subjects and that they appreciate the opportunities and time to be able to improve their understanding of the subjects they teach.

You and your staff continue to develop the school's approach to remote learning. The parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, expressed their delight regarding the support pupils received during the period of COVID-19 restrictions. The systems and processes you have developed to support pupils' learning and pastoral development in the event of further restrictions are strong.

You amended the school's action plan following the last section 5 inspection. Written plans include many appropriate actions to help improve important aspects of the school. Plans include detail relating to how you and other staff are supporting pupils' mental health and well-being, following the reopening of schools to all pupils. This illustrates your unwavering motivation and determination to support every aspect of pupils' development.

The governing body comprises individuals from a wide range of education and professional backgrounds. Governors understand in detail their statutory responsibilities and strategic roles. They ask searching questions of leaders during governor subcommittee meetings. As a result, governors have a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You meet with the chair of the governing body frequently. The chair of the governing body appreciates the need for governors to check on staff workload and promote staff well-being.

Additional support

Staff and leaders continue to benefit from a range of support from the HART and Swaledale teaching school alliances. Partnerships have been developed that are helping to improve your own leadership and that of others. This collaboration is leading to a stronger approach to phonics teaching and provision in early years.

A national leader of education (NLE) and a national leader of governance support you and the governing body. This, and the ongoing support from the local authority and other English hubs, ensure that governors and leaders across the school receive productive support at this time.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance, a representative of the local authority and an NLE to discuss the actions taken since the last section 5 inspection. Some meetings were held virtually.

I visited lessons in phonics and met with the curriculum leader of geography. I also scrutinised school action plans and the school self-evaluation document, in addition to curriculum documentation in design and technology, religious education and science. I listened to pupils read with support staff and reviewed the responses to the staff and parent questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott
Her Majesty's Inspector