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18 June 2021

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Dear Mrs Banks

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Flash Ley Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 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 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school 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 further action to:

- develop the curriculum in computing and music so that pupils' knowledge, skills and subject-specific vocabulary build over time.

Context

Since the last full inspection, the following staff have been appointed: the early years/key stage 1 leader, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the bursar. Some of leaders' plans to further develop the school's curriculum have been paused because of COVID-19.

Main findings

Senior leadership has strengthened since the last inspection. Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's development plans detail a range of strategies that are addressing the areas for improvement. Relevant, clear and specific actions are set within realistic time frames. It is clear who will do what, and when.

Leaders have increased leadership capacity in the early years team, and staff understand the improvements that are needed. They have already overhauled the curriculum in the early years. Planning now meets the needs and interests of the children. Teachers quickly identify those children who need extra help and provide them with the right support.

Reading now has a greater focus across the school. Teachers adopt a systematic approach to teaching phonics in the early years and key stage 1. This continues for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in key stage 2. Pupils are taught a range of reading skills to become more confident, fluent readers with a love of reading. Reading books match pupils' reading ages. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND read daily to an adult. Teachers read aloud to the class every day using a range of modern and classic literature, including poetry. As a result, pupils' work shows they are developing a better understanding of what they read.

As a consequence of the pandemic, pupils' stamina and confidence in writing had waned during the recent lockdown. You have moved swiftly to address this. In writing, leaders have focused on providing opportunities for pupils to write at greater length. As a result of these actions, pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling are showing improvements.

Leaders' actions to improve the mathematics curriculum are paying dividends. Teachers are focusing on helping pupils to become quicker and more confident with their mathematical calculations. Quick recall is helping improve pupils' mathematical fluency. Pupils then apply their knowledge and skills to problem-solving and reasoning tasks. Teachers provide extra tasks that challenge and extend the thinking of the most able pupils. Pupils who need extra support, receive it. Pupils' work shows that over time, their speed and accuracy improve.

A structured approach to curriculum planning in science is helping staff ensure scientific enquiry skills are taught effectively. Curriculum plans show how prior learning is built upon. Teachers check pupils' knowledge to ensure they remember key facts. Leaders are working on strengthening cross-curricular links. For example, pupils learn about scientists and inventors, and the impact they have had on our world. Pupils' science work now shows a much greater depth of understanding.

Leaders have prioritised improving reading, writing, mathematics and science. Alongside this, they have ensured that pupils access a wide range of other subjects across the curriculum. However, some subjects are further ahead than others. Leaders' work in other curriculum areas was paused because of COVID-19. Despite this setback, plans are in place to get back on track. For instance, this term leaders are focusing on upskilling teachers' knowledge and expertise in computing and music.

Despite the pandemic, leaders have ensured that a range of extra-curricular clubs and activities have continued. This term visits to local places of interest, such as Trentham Gardens, are being resumed.

Pupils say they feel safe and are taught to keep themselves safe. They practise fire drills and learn about stranger danger and internet safety. Pupils understand fundamental British Values such as tolerance and respect. They told me that new pupils receive 'a warm welcome' to their school and generally pupils look after one another.

Many parents also say positive things about the school. One parent's comment captured the general feeling of many: 'The school has a committed team of teachers and teaching assistants that genuinely care for the well-being of children.' Staff enjoy working at the school and those surveyed say the school has improved since the last full inspection. Positive things are happening. The school is moving in the right direction.

Additional support

The school has received helpful advice and support from the local authority and two teaching schools. Leaders, staff and governors have attended training and worked with advisory staff to improve aspects of their work. Consequently, subject leadership, curriculum delivery and governor expertise have improved.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders and staff and the chair of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I looked at several documents, including school improvement plans, curriculum plans and pupils' work from a range of subjects. I also examined the single central register of staff recruitment checks. I looked at 29 responses to the

online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 26 free-text responses, and 18 staff 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 Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector