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James Stanford
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Dear Mr Stanford

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stower Provost Community 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 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.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that teachers continue to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge in all subjects and adapt the curriculum to address them.

Context

Since the previous section 5 inspection, there have been several staffing changes, particularly in the Reception and Year 1 class. Three teachers joined the school in September 2020. Since then, you have stabilised staffing. A new safeguarding governor has also been appointed.

Main findings

You have made it a priority to remedy the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. In the Reception class, children have many opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in all areas of learning. Children can count accurately, recognise pairs of numbers and use appropriate mathematical vocabulary. Activities in the classroom support children's curiosity and develop their interests well.

The teaching of reading is improving markedly. Leaders have developed a clear and consistent structure for phonics teaching. Well-trained staff give pupils at risk of falling behind extra support. This work is making a significant difference to how well pupils learn to read. For older pupils, there is a sharp focus on the teaching of reading skills and building knowledge. For example, pupils are confident in discussing how authors use language to engage the reader.

Your work to improve early writing is paying off. In the Reception and Year 1 class, most pupils can use finger spacing, spell simple words and write sentences accurately. However, a minority of pupils struggle with spelling and punctuation, particularly in Year 2. Staff provide timely and effective support for pupils to practise and apply the skills they have learned in lessons to improve their writing.

You and other teachers are building a well-sequenced curriculum. There is a clear overview so that teachers know what to teach and when. In many subjects, curriculum plans identify the important knowledge and skills pupils need to succeed. This is already having a positive impact on their learning. For example, older pupils are confident to explain how historical events have influenced modern day life. Still, the implementation of some of these plans is in its infancy. Your work to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding in all subjects is evolving.

Governors understand many of the school's priorities. They hold meetings with leaders regularly and consider staff well-being. However, the school's improvement plan lacks sufficient detail. For example, it does not set out precisely enough leaders' intended actions to improve the quality of the wider curriculum. Therefore, this makes it hard for governors to check on the impact of leaders' work rigorously.

Additional support

You and your staff have benefited from a range of external support and challenge. Work with the local authority and a multi-academy trust is beginning to strengthen curriculum planning and subject leadership. A local literacy network is supporting staff to improve their subject knowledge. This is helping to secure improvements to the writing curriculum.

Governors seek training and advice to carry out their roles effectively. They have benefited from opportunities to share best practice with other governing bodies.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other staff. I held a meeting with a representative for governance and a local authority representative to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection.

I reviewed school documents, including curriculum plans. I met with a group of pupils and looked at samples of their work. I visited lessons and listened to pupils read to an adult. I considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 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 Dorset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Dale Burr
Her Majesty's Inspector