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Tracy Boulter
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Dear Mrs Boulter

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Welbourn Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 November 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 pandemic began. I discussed the ongoing 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:

- provide subject leaders with further opportunities to check that the curriculum is effectively delivered and is making a difference to what pupils know and remember

- develop a consistent and manageable assessment system for foundation subjects, so that teachers can systematically check that pupils remember essential knowledge.

Context

Since the previous inspection in September 2019, the school has reorganised its class structure. Pupils are now taught in three classes: children and pupils in the Reception Year, Year 1 and 2 are in one class; pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 are in another; and Year 5 and Year 6 pupils form the final class. One teacher has recently returned from maternity leave. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are taught by two job-share teachers: one in the morning and another in the afternoon.

There have been significant changes to the governing body. A new chair and vice-chair of governors and two new parent governors have been appointed.

Main findings

You have made improvements to the school since the previous inspection. You are sharply focused on improving the quality of education for the pupils in the school. You know what is working well and recognise that there is still more work to be done. The school's development plans are well matched to the areas for improvement. You have prioritised the right things. Staff are united in a desire to improve the school further.

Curriculum development has been key to school improvement. You have made sure that curriculum plans are in place for all subjects. These plans are well sequenced and identify what pupils need to learn in each year, starting in the early years. Some activities to monitor how well the curriculum is delivered, and its impact on what pupils know and remember, have been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic. You have plans in place to make sure that further checks take place. This will help you to make changes to the curriculum, where they are needed.

Subject leaders have received training to support them to lead their subjects across the school. Their confidence is growing and subject leadership is improving. Where teachers are not experts in subjects, for example music or modern foreign languages, you have used a scheme to support the design of the curriculum. Systems are in place for assessment in core subjects such as English and mathematics. You have lots of ideas as to how to assess what pupils know and remember in other subjects. However, a consistent approach has not yet been agreed. This will need to be a priority so that you can check that pupils do not have gaps in their learning.

You have strengthened the teaching of reading since the previous inspection. The new phonics programme is more rigorous. It has ensured that there is a more consistent and systematic approach to the teaching of phonics. Pupils' phonic knowledge is regularly assessed. Phonics groups are well organised and ensure that pupils keep up with the new sounds they are taught. Books are matched better to the sounds that pupils know. More pupils read well.

There is a sense that pupils enjoy reading more, and that you are developing their love of reading. Reading areas around the school inspire pupils to read, including the new library. Teachers make sure that pupils experience a wide range of books, for example: classics, books for humour, poetry and historical fiction. Pupils said that they love reading. They talked enthusiastically about their favourite books.

During my visit, pupils worked and played well together. Pupils said that their teachers are 'fun' and 'fair'. They are proud of their school and said that pupils who are new to the school are made welcome.

You have worked closely with governors to improve the school. Governors continue to hold you to account for the changes that are made. They make their own checks to validate the progress the school is making towards becoming a good school.

Additional support

You have embraced the support you have been offered to improve the quality of education. You have worked successfully with consultants and the local authority to strengthen the curriculum. As a result, the curriculum is better organised and more ambitious than it was previously. You and your staff have also engaged in the support you have been given to improve subject leadership. Subject leaders said that this has been particularly useful.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, curriculum leaders and the leader for special educational needs and/or disabilities. I also held meetings with three governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I spoke to a group of pupils. I listened to pupils reading with a familiar adult and visited phonics lessons. I examined the school's single central record, the school improvement plan, governing body minutes, external reviews of the school and curriculum plans.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Poole
Ofsted Inspector