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Alison Beckett
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Beckett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Burlington Junior 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 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 the reading curriculum is clearly sequenced so that teachers and leaders know what should be taught and when.

Context

Following some staffing changes, leadership is now stable. At the time of this inspection, a very small minority of staff were still affected by COVID-19. This was being well managed by leaders.

Some of the school's plans for curriculum improvement have been affected by repeated periods of time when the school was only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders are reorganising curriculum plans in subjects such as science and geography to fill gaps in pupils' knowledge.

The usual systems that governors use to check on leaders' actions have also been restricted.

Main findings

Leaders have taken decisive action and made the necessary improvements towards becoming a good school. You have reacted swiftly to findings from previous inspections and have ensured that staff are well trained to deliver your chosen phonics programme. Leaders have concentrated their efforts on curriculum planning and sequencing. You ensure that teachers and leaders have the skills and knowledge to teach your curriculum to pupils effectively.

You have introduced a programme of curriculum monitoring led by subject leaders. This ensures that subject leaders have a clear view of their curriculum. Leaders are continually adapting the order of learning based on their findings so that the curriculum addresses the gaps that pupils have in their knowledge. Where leaders are newer to their roles, you have made it possible for curriculum responsibilities to be shared. This is building leadership capacity in school and helping you to expedite change.

You have invested in training for all leaders. This has given them the subject knowledge and understanding to build well-sequenced and progressive curriculums. Leaders are passionate about, and ambitious for, what pupils can achieve. Leaders are well informed and knowledgeable; aspirations are higher, and pupils are responding to these.

In subjects such as science, the knowledge you intend pupils to learn is logically sequenced. Leaders have introduced a new scheme of work in geography. The rigour that teachers now show in introducing new and often complex vocabulary is helping pupils to understand challenging concepts. This is evident in the way that pupils speak. Pupils in Year 5 were able to talk about their learning with confidence. They described how volcanoes are created and demonstrated a clear understanding of tectonic plates. They are learning and remembering more.

This year, you have retrained all staff in your chosen phonics scheme. Adults who teach phonics now have the knowledge and skills to do so effectively. Leaders and teachers use assessment information well to ensure that the books pupils read match the sounds they know. You have identified a significant proportion of pupils as requiring additional help with their reading. These numbers are now reducing because of the ongoing phonics support you provide. Repeated periods of time when the school was only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions extended the time it will take for these pupils to catch up. However, more time is being dedicated to phonics teaching for these pupils. Leaders are ambitious and resolute that pupils will do well.

Leaders have placed high-quality texts at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils speak with great knowledge and enthusiasm about the texts they are reading. Recently introduced initiatives, such as 'drop everything and read', and whole-class story times are further raising the profile of reading. This is engendering a reading culture across the school and encouraging pupils to read widely and often. However, leaders know there is further work to do. Leaders do not yet have clear curriculum plans for reading once pupils are able to decode. This makes it difficult for leaders to accurately monitor and evaluate the impact of the reading curriculum.

Leaders and teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As a result, lessons are settled and staff promote a calm working environment. Newly introduced initiatives in mathematics encourage pupils to work collaboratively on tasks. They do so sensibly and listen attentively to the opinions of others. There is very little low-level disruption. Leaders continue to invest in staff training and strategies to support the small minority of pupils who struggle with their behaviour.

The composition of the governing body has recently changed. Two new parent governors have recently been appointed. Governors acknowledge that their usual approach to monitoring the work of leaders has been hindered due to COVID-19 restrictions. They have been unable to make regular visits to school. However, they have sought training that supports them in asking challenging questions of leaders. This enables them to evaluate the impact of the actions leaders are taking.

Additional support

Leaders have drawn on support from the local authority. Leaders have received advice and support in developing their physical education and history curriculums. Leaders report that this has helped them sequence these curriculum areas more coherently.

Leaders have forged links with other local schools to share practice in the use of technology in the curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. I listened to pupils read to an adult. I met with the school business manager to discuss the safeguarding checks that are in place to keep pupils safe.

I met with both subject leaders for mathematics and visited three mathematics lessons. I met three members of the governing body, including the chair. I also met with the local authority school improvement partner. I spoke to a group of Year 5 pupils about their learning and gathered their views on the school. I held discussions with both geography leaders and the science leader about developments in their subject and how they had chosen to organise the curriculum.

I reviewed 15 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 40 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including 21 free-text responses.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector