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Rachel Rice
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Dear Mrs Rice

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Deanshanger Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 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:

- refine the curriculum for phonics so that it demonstrates high expectations of what pupils will learn each term.

Context

Since the last inspection a new coordinator for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has joined the school. New phase leaders have been appointed. There are three new teachers on the staff team. Five governors have joined the governing body.

Many pupils attended school in person during the second lockdown. Leaders and teachers checked that all pupils who were learning remotely during this time joined in and were safe. Attendance is now back to normal levels, although a few pupils have needed extra help to feel confident returning to school. Leaders made sure that pupils and families who needed additional support got this help.

Leaders have had to adapt some of the changes they planned to make due to the impact of the pandemic. For example, they purchased eBooks so that pupils learning at home had better access to books that they could read. Throughout the pandemic, leaders, governors and external partners have continued to check whether the school is improving.

Main findings

Work to improve communication with parents and carers began swiftly. Leaders now use a wider range of electronic methods so that parents find out information sooner. Staff make sure these new approaches include everyone. During the pandemic, regular video updates and messages improved communication further. Leaders made sure that parents knew how to contact someone at school if they had any concerns.

Staff organised online meetings for parents about how they teach mathematics and phonics. More parents were able to attend these meetings than when they were held face to face. Parental confidence is growing, and the majority of parents would recommend the school to other families. However, leaders know that they need to communicate better with some parents of pupils with SEND. The newly appointed special educational needs and disabilities coordinator has begun to respond to parents' concerns quickly.

Leaders have raised their expectations of what all pupils will be able to read. Teachers have chosen books to share with pupils. They have picked particular texts to enrich pupils' awareness of the world around them. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their reading. They say that they need to 'practise, practise, practise' to become better readers. Younger pupils enjoy the chance to read in 'Huxley's horse box' and older pupils describe what has influenced them to choose the authors that they like to read.

Teachers and leaders have worked together to prioritise reading. Staff like working together in teams. This helps them to share their knowledge of what sounds pupils

remember and what they have forgotten. Staff value the training that they have had. Leaders know that more training is still needed to make sure that staff subject knowledge is completely consistent. Leaders have begun to establish a curriculum which builds pupils' knowledge of sounds. However, the curriculum does not yet precisely show what teachers expect pupils to know each term. Many pupils become fluent early readers. Most books match the sounds pupils know, but some contain sounds that pupils have not yet mastered.

Leaders, including governors, undertake a range of activities to check what pupils know. This has continued throughout lockdown, supported by external partners. Leaders know with more precision what has worked well and what still needs to improve. They use this information to write clear plans and to check that the actions that they are taking are improving the school. They have made changes to some parts of the curriculum, such as mathematics, making sure that pupils build on what they have learned before. Governors check that the actions that leaders take are making a difference to pupils.

Phase leaders help teachers to know more about what pupils learned before and what comes next. 'Subject champions' and other leaders speak with pupils to check what they can remember in subjects such as history and geography. Leaders have spotted that some pupils do not recall important information. Teachers have planned a rich curriculum. However, they have not always identified precisely what knowledge pupils will gain. The curriculum is not yet sequenced in all subjects so that pupils revisit knowledge to help them remember it and learn more.

Additional support

Leaders are supported by a national leader for education and the Grand Union Partnership multi-academy trust. This has helped leaders to check whether what they are doing to improve the school is making a difference. Leaders have also worked with a local authority adviser. Leaders and governors have valued this support. It has helped leaders to evaluate the quality of education in mathematics and English in particular. Further work is planned to support leaders' understanding of how to sequence knowledge in the wider curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. I also met with phase leaders, 'subject champions' and teachers. I visited lessons and listened to pupils reading to their teachers. I spoke with groups of pupils. I considered plans for school improvement and aspects of the school's curriculum. I read records of visits by external partners and additional information that the school provided about its curriculum. I considered the staff questionnaire and spoke with members of staff. I also considered the views of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I met with governors, a

representative from the local authority and external partners who are working with the school to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Hazel Henson
Her Majesty's Inspector