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9 June 2021

Scott Smith
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mr Smith

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Brindle Gregson Lane Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 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 received a judgement of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspection.

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 subject curriculums are planned and implemented well, so that pupils can develop their knowledge systematically over time

- build upon work to improve the knowledge and skills of subject leaders in supporting teachers to check on what pupils have learned and remembered.

Context

The disruption caused by the pandemic has delayed some subject leaders in their efforts to implement improved curriculums.

At the end of the spring term 2021 you were appointed as acting headteacher. Since your appointment, you have been leading the school with the support of an associate headteacher. An acting assistant headteacher has been appointed from within the school. A new headteacher has been appointed and they will take up their post in September 2021. Two new teachers have also joined the school.

Main findings

Following the previous inspection in November 2019, school leaders and governors set about developing a clear vision for pupils to benefit from an ambitious and well-planned curriculum. Subject leaders had started to redesign their curriculum plans, but the pace of development lacked urgency.

More recently, actions taken by you, the associate headteacher, and the new senior leadership team have rapidly accelerated the pace of improvement. For instance, in most subjects, curriculum plans set out what pupils need to know and be able to do, including in the early years. In some subjects, such as English, history and geography, curriculum plans identify the key knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to learn. However, due to the impact of COVID-19, some subject plans are still to be refined and implemented.

At the previous inspection, inspectors asked senior leaders to provide subject leaders with training to allow them to monitor and improve the delivery of subject curriculums. Due to the disruption caused by the pandemic, some subject leaders are further along this journey than others. For example, some subject leaders have a limited understanding of how best to support teachers to check on what pupils know and remember.

School leaders have maintained a sharp focus on reading, including in the early years. Younger pupils use their knowledge of phonics to read confidently. Teachers keep a careful check on the phonic sounds that children and pupils know. If children or pupils fall behind, teachers provide additional effective support.

Since the previous inspection, the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) has acted to strengthen the advice that they provide for staff who support those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For example, the SENCo provides highly effective support for teachers on how to adapt curriculums to

meet the needs of this group of pupils. Leaders review their plans to support pupils with SEND regularly, alongside staff, parents and carers.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors found that lines of communication between staff, senior leaders and governors needed to improve. The staff that I spoke with told me that communication is much stronger. All staff who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire said that they felt well supported and proud to work at the school.

The governance of the school has improved dramatically. Following a review of governance, members of the governing body increased the level of challenge provided to leaders in addressing the issues identified at the previous inspection. Despite the disruption caused by the pandemic, governors have remained focused on ensuring that improvements to the curriculum continued. More recently they have acted speedily to appoint a new headteacher.

Additional support

The local authority has provided a range of appropriate support to the school. You acknowledged how effective this support has been in helping to tackle the issues raised at the previous inspection. In recent weeks, governors have valued the guidance provided from the local authority to support them in appointing a new headteacher. More recently, you and other senior leaders are benefiting from help from an associate headteacher. This support is enabling leaders to accelerate their improvements to the curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, subject leaders, pupils, five representatives of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also spoke on the telephone with an associate headteacher who is currently supporting the school.

I examined a variety of documentation, including leaders' improvement plans; minutes of governing body meetings; subject leaders' curriculum plans and school documents relating to safeguarding. I reviewed 45 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 28 responses to Ofsted's free-text facility. I also reviewed the 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Alongside subject leaders, I examined a range of pupils' work. I also carried out a series of visits to classrooms and observed a small number of pupils reading to a trusted adult.

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

Yours sincerely

Garry White
Her Majesty's Inspector