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Janine Arrowsmith
Head of School
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Dear Miss Arrowsmith

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Green Meadow 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.

Context

There have been significant changes in leadership since the previous inspection in October 2019. The head of school was appointed in April 2020, having previously been the deputy headteacher. Other leadership changes include internal appointments for the positions of deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and

early years leader. Many subject leaders are new to their curriculum roles this academic year. Governance is now carried out by a regional governing body who oversees the four schools in Excelsior Trust.

Main findings

The members of the new leadership team, under the clear steer of the head of school, have worked hard to improve the quality of education for all pupils. They have taken appropriate action to address the areas identified in the previous section 5 report. However, the implementation and impact of some of their actions remain at an early stage and need further time to be embedded.

Leaders have a sharp focus on school improvement and know what actions are needed. These are set out clearly in the school's own self-evaluation and improvement plan. They have prioritised curriculum development and established a broad and balanced curriculum. All subjects are now offered, and curriculum planning is structured and well-sequenced. As a result, pupils are beginning to build their skills and knowledge in order to meet national curriculum expectations.

Subject leaders are enthusiastic and committed to raising standards. Some are specialists in their subject area, while others hold a personal interest and are keen to motivate and inspire pupils and staff. Training provided by the trust and senior leaders has enabled subject leaders to develop their leadership skills. While curriculum action plans are now established in all subjects, leaders' monitoring and evaluation skills are still very embryonic and need further development. Many curriculum leaders are new to post and have not yet been able to detect what is working well and where further improvement is needed.

Reading is a key priority for the school and is given appropriate weighting in school improvement planning. A love of reading is fostered well. The creation of a well-stocked library and competitions for pupils to win tokens to spend at the 'book vending machine' help enthuse and encourage pupils to read. Phonics teaching is well established, and pupils have a good grasp of how to decode and blend words. Reading books are closely matched to the sounds that pupils learn. This helps pupils build their confidence and develop their reading fluency. All staff have received phonics training so are able to support weaker readers in their classes. However, the lowest 20% of pupils do not read frequently enough to an adult in school in order to help them catch up quickly.

The profile and time given to art, design technology and modern foreign languages has increased significantly. Planning demonstrates that teachers have identified the skills and knowledge they want pupils to learn sequentially and progressively. Pupils talk about these subjects, and say they enjoy learning new skills and vocabulary. School events, such as the whole-school art week in October 2020, add to pupils' experiences and exposure to new knowledge. However, achievement in these subjects is not at the level it should be, especially for older pupils. This is because

pupils have gaps in their basic skills and their starting points are very low. For example, Year 6 pupils are learning to count to ten, use greetings and learn simple words in French. They are therefore considerably behind in their ability to communicate in a modern foreign language. This is a requirement set out in the national curriculum by the end of key stage 2.

Leaders have made significant progress in improving the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. This is now a strength of the school. Pupils have a strong understanding of how to maintain good physical and mental health. They are also well versed in discussing and debating issues because oracy is threaded across all subjects. Pupils learn to agree, build on, or challenge the views of others respectfully. This helps build their character. They demonstrate high levels of awareness and acceptance of others who are different. As a result, their levels of social responsibility are developing well. The PSHE curriculum has been established quickly but successfully. It is delivered effectively and has strengthened pupils' personal development and reduced incidents of racism and bullying in the school.

Governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They question and challenge leaders and have also focused on staff well-being during the pandemic. They have maintained regular contact with leaders and continued to monitor the progress of the school. Through pupil voice, governors are aware that the curriculum is now broader and more robust. They know where curriculum strengths lie but are also realistic that there is still more to be done. Governors appreciate being part of the trust. They use their oversight of the four schools to compare and contrast where strengths and weaknesses lie but maintain high expectations for all pupils.

Additional support

The trust has provided regular and effective support for leaders and staff to develop the quality of education. Government funding has been used well to provide coaching and support for the head of school and deputy headteacher. Support provided by the curriculum leader has ensured that key subject knowledge and skills are explicit in teachers' planning. The deputy chief education officer (DCEO) is also clear where improvements have been made but accurately reflects that the school needs further time to embed curriculum content firmly and fully. There is a productive working relationship between the trust, governors and school leaders.

School leaders value the advisory support commissioned from external consultants. Subject leaders have worked in groups, and as individuals, to receive tailored input and feedback. Leaders consider that this support has helped improve subject leaders' understanding of their roles and, as a result, are more effective in carrying them out.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the head of school and deputy headteacher, subject leaders, pupils, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust and those responsible for governance. The inspector also visited lessons, observed pupils reading to a member of staff, scrutinised documents and the school's website and considered the responses to Ofsted's parents' and staff's surveys.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Excelsior Multi-Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector