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Sue Finch
Headteacher
Westminster Community Primary School
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Dear Ms Finch

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Westminster Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 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 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. 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 staff address the gaps in pupils' mathematics learning with greater urgency so that pupils can get back on track with the planned curriculum.

Context

- The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has affected leaders' plans to fully implement the new mathematics curriculum.
- Children in the Reception Year experienced a 'bubble' closure in the autumn term for two weeks. This disrupted the start to their education.
- Since the previous inspection, three newly qualified teachers have been appointed to replace members of staff who have left the school.
- A new chair of governors was appointed in the autumn term 2020.

Main findings

- You and the senior leaders are taking the necessary actions to address the weaknesses that were identified at the previous inspection. Your suitable action plan is focused on the main priorities for improvement. It clearly identifies what needs to be accomplished in order for Westminster Primary to become a good school. You have the support and trust of staff and governors. All of the staff I spoke to are positive about the changes that are being made to improve the school. There is a common sense of purpose among staff and governors alike.
- Improving the curriculum is your key priority. Despite the challenges imposed by the pandemic, subject leaders, under your direction, have continued to review and refine the curriculum plans for most subjects, including English, science and, more recently, mathematics. Subject leaders have made sure that staff understand what pupils should know by the end of each topic. This is to ensure that pupils are ready for the next steps in their learning. The refreshed curriculum plans are helping staff to understand what should be taught and when this should happen. This means that staff are beginning to deliver the planned curriculum more consistently across the school.
- Now that most pupils have returned to school, teachers are adapting the planned curriculum to help pupils make up for missed learning. This is most noticeable in mathematics. While the new ambitious mathematics curriculum plans are in place, the pandemic prevented teachers from implementing them fully. This continues to be the case. This is because teachers are spending a lot of time revisiting previous learning to refresh pupils' memories. As a result, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are not keeping up with the planned curriculum, which in turn means they are falling further behind.
- Improvements to the reading curriculum are reaping rewards. Pupils enjoy reading. The English and phonics leaders have ensured that pupils' learning

builds on their existing knowledge. Teachers assess pupils' reading skills regularly, particularly in phonics. They are quick to spot pupils who need extra help. Pupils are given additional support so that they can keep up rather than having to catch up with the reading programme. Pupils with SEND, and those who need more support, revisit their learning often to help them to remember what has been taught. As a result, pupils in Year 1 are becoming more adept at sounding out words with increasing speed and accuracy. By the end of key stage 2, pupils read with greater fluency and expression.

- Improvements to the science curriculum mean that pupils learn scientific knowledge and key vocabulary in a logical progression. Pupils can recall their learning in science well and with enthusiasm. They are starting to draw across different topics and subjects to describe how their prior learning is helping them with their current work. For example, pupils relate how their work on time zones in geography helps to explain how the earth's rotation creates day and night. Leaders for some other subjects, such as history and geography, are using the successful approach to science as a template to develop their own subjects. They are currently adding detail to the curriculum to ensure that pupils' knowledge and skills are developed more coherently from topic to topic.
- Governance is improving. Governors have used the external support from the local authority and a consultant to review their work and their roles. This has led to them being better informed about the work of leaders and in a much better position to question and challenge leaders about the quality of education at the school.

Additional support

You have made effective use of the advice of external consultants and the local authority, to help bring about change at the school. You and the senior leadership team have gained confidence from the support brokered by the local authority. You have also sought advice from the English and mathematics hubs to help subject leaders to improve the planning and delivery of the curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, pupils, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, the leader for early years, teaching staff, the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I spoke with you about safeguarding measures. I conducted a review of pupils' work in mathematics and science and I reviewed curriculum plans for science, geography and history. I visited phonics and mathematics lessons. I also considered the minutes of governing body meetings. I also took account of one response to Ofsted's Parent View and 14 responses to the staff survey.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector