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Jamie Liddell
Headteacher
St Martin's CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School
Shady Bower
Salisbury
Wiltshire
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Dear Mr Liddell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Martin's CofE Voluntary Aided 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 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 the school 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

The executive headteacher and the early years leader left at the end of the summer term 2020. You joined the school as headteacher in September 2020. An interim executive board (IEB) was appointed by the Department for Education in

September 2020. A new subject leader for English took up post at the same time. The deputy headteacher, who had been acting headteacher, returned to her previous role. A special educational needs and disabilities coordinator was appointed in September 2019. A new phonics leader was appointed at the same time.

COVID-19 has halted the delivery of some foundation subjects, such as geography and history. A few pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities did not attend school during the third national lockdown. You provided remote education for all pupils.

Main findings

After a time of continued instability, leaders have taken swift action to improve the school despite the pandemic. Since taking up your post, you have made a thorough diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You have implemented new ways to check the performance of staff and trained middle leaders to do this. This has added capacity to leadership.

Leaders have prioritised improvements in English and mathematics, as standards were too low. Your purposeful training has made sure that pupils are learning the right knowledge at the right time. Following a revised approach to teaching phonics, pupils say sounds more accurately. The English leader has restocked reading books in key stage 2 so that pupils have more choice. Teachers read to pupils daily in every class to extend pupils' vocabulary. However, you know that fluency in reading is still not where it should be.

You have been relentless in ensuring that pupils are safe and supported during, and following, COVID-19 lockdowns. Several parents commented on this in the Ofsted survey, Parent View. Behaviour has improved, as staff are applying the behaviour policy more consistently. Teachers appreciate the support they receive from leaders in this area. On the rare occasion that bullying happens, pupils say that staff deal with it effectively.

During this term, you have provided a wide choice of extra-curricular activities to help pupils settle back into school. Music, physical education and the performing arts dominate what is on offer. These subjects reflect well the inclusiveness of the school culture. As a result, pupils are gaining emotional stability and physical well-being.

The members of the IEB provide a clear steer for you. They have given the necessary balance of support and challenge in these difficult times and helped you take the action needed. They, like you, know that the next priority is to provide a curriculum in every subject that helps pupils to prepare for their next steps in education.

Additional support

The local authority has supported leadership in the school with the IEB. It has checked on what is needed and when. It is focused on securing a better experience for pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and other documentation.

I looked at 30 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 12 free-text responses, as well as 16 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the executive board, the director of education for the Diocese of Salisbury, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wiltshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector