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Mark Rogers
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Dear Mr Rogers

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Barrowcliff School

Following my visit to your school on 22 June 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:

- continue to support subject leaders to carefully plan and sequence the wider curriculum, so it is clear what knowledge pupils will learn in each subject from the early years onwards
- further develop systems to hold subject leaders to account for the quality of the implementation and the impact of the curriculum in their subjects on pupils' learning.

Context

Leaders and teachers have continued to work on improving the school. In particular, the development of the curriculum in English, mathematics and science has been a priority. Monitoring the implementation of the curriculum to ensure consistency across school has been more difficult due to the impact of COVID-19 regulations.

Since the previous inspection in October 2019, there have been some changes in governors and staff. The deputy headteacher completed a short secondment to a local school and has now returned to her substantive post. A governor with curriculum responsibility and a new parent governor have joined the governing body.

Main findings

You have been proactive in moving the school forward and strengthening leadership since your last inspection. You have a clear, strategic plan in place to make the school a good school. Leaders are clear what their priorities are and have precisely planned the actions they will undertake to address these. Throughout this inspection you showed a strong understanding of your community. The pastoral support and care you provide for your families are tangible.

Early reading is now a strength in this school. Teachers model phonic strategies well and pupils benefit from consistent routines that begin in the early years and continue throughout key stage 1. Struggling readers in Year 3 and Year 4 continue to receive daily phonics input. These older pupils read with an adult each day. The strategies delivered in phonics sessions are used to support pupils in their reading across the wider curriculum. This helps pupils to move from learning to read to reading to learn.

The expertise of subject leaders is improving due to the support of senior leaders and the training which is being delivered to all staff. Curriculum planning in English, mathematics and science is a strength. In these subjects, leaders understand the prior learning pupils need in order to access each unit of work. Planning clearly evidences what all pupils will know and better remember. This supports all pupils in accessing learning, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

In some subjects, plans do not show what pupils should know, be able to do and remember from the early years onwards. Some leaders are learning to identify and explain more precisely the impact that they are having on pupils' progress and learning. As a result, prior knowledge is not built upon as consistently as it might be in all subjects. Leaders monitor the implementation of the curriculum but there is further work to do to ensure that implementation is consistent across all subjects.

Clear and effective systems are in place to support pupils with SEND. The special educational needs and disabilities coordinator is working closely with subject leaders as they plan the wider curriculum. Each pupil has a passport detailing what they are good at, how they learn best, what they find difficult and what resources help them to learn independently. This dual approach supports pupils with additional needs.

Governors provide both support and challenge to leaders. They continued their school improvement work remotely throughout the pandemic and are looking forward to continuing this work in school from September. Governors made safeguarding a priority throughout the period when schools were partially closed. The vice-chair and the safeguarding governor have accessed additional training to ensure they have the most up-to-date information to support them in keeping children safe.

Additional support

School leaders work well with the local authority. They feel confident that the work they have undertaken with their senior education adviser is supporting the school's improvement journey effectively. The senior leadership team has planned further training to support curriculum development this term. Governors take advantage of training provided by North Yorkshire's governor services. All governors have been invited to undertake further safeguarding training in September 2021.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I listened to pupils reading with adults in school, visited lessons, scrutinised documentation, including school improvement and curriculum plans, and checked responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for staff and parents.

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

Yours sincerely

Zoe Lightfoot
Her Majesty's Inspector