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Neil Pritchard
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Dear Mr Pritchard

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Pewsey Vale School

Following my visit to your school on 8 July 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

Since the previous full inspection, a new chair of the finance committee has been appointed. There have been new appointments to senior roles, including a special educational needs coordinator and a leader for behaviour and attendance. New staff have taken on curriculum leadership roles in English and food technology. From

September 2021, there will be new curriculum leaders in design and technology, physical education and history.

Main findings

Since the last full inspection, you have acted swiftly to improve pupils' behaviour. Staff feel that there is a significant difference. They can teach without disruption. The school is a calm and orderly place. You have appointed a new leader to enable this work to continue efficiently. Pupils attend school regularly. Staff are in regular communication with the very few families of pupils who have persistent absence. This has led to improvements in attendance across the school. However, Year 11 pupils are not attending school currently.

This is a caring school. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They respect staff and feel that everyone has their best intentions in what they do. School leaders make sure pupils are safe and know how to stay safe. Leaders are ensuring that the curriculum builds pupils' understanding of equality and diversity to prepare them for life beyond school. Despite this, older pupils are not yet aware of fundamental British Values.

Parents are positive about the work of the school. They appreciate the way that staff have supported families during the pandemic. As one parent said, 'Pewsey Vale has gone above and beyond in all circumstances. I know 100% that I made the correct decision to send my children, out of catchment, to this school.'

You have overhauled the curriculum, especially in key stage 3. Some subject leaders have embraced the changes well. They have high expectations and are thinking deeply about when to introduce new knowledge to pupils. This is the case in mathematics, English, modern languages and art. As yet, other subject leaders have still not considered the breadth of the key stage 4 curriculum beyond examination specifications.

Staff support Year 7 pupils who struggle to read fluently. They help pupils to understand the books they are reading. Although these pupils read aloud regularly, they are not supported in decoding phonetically. Consequently, they guess what words might be. This does not help them to become fluent readers. Other pupils in Years 7 and 8 read within lessons and teachers guide them to choose books that match their ability in reading. Pupils in key stage 4 are not supported in their reading choices. As a result, their vocabulary and knowledge are not enriched independently of subject teaching.

Leaders in mathematics and English have assessed the gaps in pupils' learning since their return in March 2021. They have changed the curriculum prudently to accommodate this. However, the presentation of younger pupils' work is very poor. There are too many incomplete pieces. Many worksheets are loose within exercise books and in no particular order. Teachers' expectations of handwriting and layout are too low. Pupils cannot use their books as a source of revision because they are

not organised well enough. The presentation of older pupils' work is better, but it is still too variable.

Governors are dedicated and resilient. They challenge poor practice and hold leaders to account effectively. They are keen to support the work on the curriculum strategically but require further guidance on this.

Additional support

Leaders are supported by a local teaching school. The newly qualified teacher has attended essential training on her second subject. In addition, the teaching school provides training and collaboration for middle leaders in assessment and moderation. With many departments having a single teacher, this is invaluable.

The local federation of schools provides training for bursars and governors.

The school improvement partner has an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development. She challenges and supports the headteacher in her regular reviews of progress.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and the school improvement partner to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I looked at safeguarding and the work of pupils, visited lessons and listened to pupils read. I read responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 82 free-text responses, and staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, 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