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11 June 2021

Jose Hodgkins  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Hodgkins

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Upperby Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 13 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 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:

- refine the improvement plan so that the criteria for measuring success are more precise
- resume subject leaders' work with governors so that they are better informed about the curriculum
- resume the checks on the newly implemented curriculum plans, for example in religious education (RE), so that leaders can identify what is working well and what further development is required.

## **Context**

The pandemic has brought significant disruption to the school and wider community. In particular, leaders' plans to embed and monitor the new curriculum plans for some subjects have been delayed due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

A new governor has been appointed since the previous inspection. There is currently one vacancy on the governing body.

## **Main findings**

Since the previous inspection, leaders, governors and staff have worked diligently to bring about positive change. You have raised staff's expectations for all pupils to be as successful as they can be. Leaders have developed a curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Curriculum plans covering the early years to Year 6 have been carefully designed.

You have an appropriate action plan in place to tackle the weaknesses raised at the previous inspection. However, the criteria that you are using to measure your success lacks clarity and precision. This hinders leaders and governors from knowing if their work is making a positive difference to pupils' experience at the school.

Subject leaders have built up their knowledge and understanding of how to lead their subject areas effectively. Curriculum plans clearly sequence the knowledge that you want pupils to have. These plans build progressively on pupils' prior learning. Appropriate training for staff is helping them to deliver the curriculum effectively. Staff work with the special educational needs coordinator to identify how best to adapt the curriculum plans to meet the needs of pupils with SEND when necessary.

For most subjects, the new curriculum plans are fully in place. Leaders for these subjects check the delivery of the curriculum and provide further support for staff if needed. Leaders' actions are having a positive impact. For example, pupils can

explain how their knowledge of electrical circuits gained in Year 4 helps them when designing and building a parking buzzer for a model car in Year 6. However, the pandemic has delayed similar checks on all subjects, for example RE. This means that leaders are less assured that the new curriculum in these subjects is helping pupils to know more and remember more.

Teachers have identified that some pupils have struggled to remember some elements of the curriculum that was taught when most pupils were learning at home. Teachers are adapting their plans to enable forgotten content to be delivered during the summer term. Pupils are beginning to catch up with their learning because of the additional help that they receive. Teachers' plans identify clearly what the pupils know and need to learn next.

Curriculum plans across a range of subjects identify the essential vocabulary that pupils need for each subject. Through high-quality texts, staff engage pupils' interest and enrich further their vocabulary. The pupils that I spoke with explained confidently how they use their learning in English to improve the quality of their writing in other subjects.

The teaching of reading remains a high priority, especially as you have spotted that pupils' phonics knowledge is not as strong as it was prior to the spring term. Pupils who are struggling to read, including pupils in key stage 2, have the help that they need to catch up.

The ongoing training that governors receive contributes to their improved ability to offer effective support and challenge to leaders. Although in their infancy prior to the pandemic, meetings with subject leaders were providing governors with a comprehensive overview of the improvements in the school. These meetings were disrupted due to COVID-19 restrictions and have only recently resumed. This has hampered governors' ability to evaluate the progress of the planned actions to improve the quality of education provided.

Staff value your consideration towards their workload and well-being, especially during the current circumstances. Parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, appreciate the care and guidance that you and the staff provide, particularly with remote learning.

### **Additional support**

You, staff and governors value the range of external support that you receive. You have used this support well to strengthen subject leadership and to improve the design and delivery of the curriculum. Governors have responded positively to the support provided by the local authority, which is strengthening leadership further still. Your engagement with other schools has been beneficial for staff at all levels, although much of this work has been hindered by the pandemic.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders and subject leaders. I also met representatives of those responsible for governance and spoke with a representative from the local authority by telephone to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at examples of their work. I visited phonics lessons and also listened to pupils read. I reviewed a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. I also reviewed improvement plans, curriculum planning and governors' minutes.

I took account of the 61 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also considered 13 free-text comments from parents and the 36 responses to the staff online 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 Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Stringer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**