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Dear Mr Campbell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Eastbrook School

Following my visit to your school on 1 July 2021 with Aliko Constantopoulou, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 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:

- develop the sequencing of the primary curriculum in geography and history so that the key concepts are clear and are revisited, to help pupils remember more and make connections between topics
- develop secondary pupils' understanding of how, when and why learning builds on their prior knowledge and relates to what they will be learning next.

Context

Since the additional remote monitoring inspection in February 2021, further changes have been made to the governing body. Currently, there are two acting co-chairs of governors. A new chair and vice-chair will be elected in September. Elections for parent governors were being held at the time of this inspection.

Governors have taken the decision to close the sixth form. It will relaunch in September 2022 with a changed post-16 curriculum offer.

Main findings

Pupils' behaviour has continued to improve, with a significant reduction in reported low-level disruption. This has enabled more focus to be placed on the pupils who need intensive support with their behaviour. Members of the inclusion team work together to provide personalised support. Systems for behaviour management are clear. You have made sure that all staff understand and use them. The 'character curriculum' supports work on behaviour across the primary and secondary phases. This year, greater emphasis has been placed on rewarding pupils for good behaviour through the 'house' system.

In the primary school, leaders have remained committed to offering pupils wider opportunities, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, primary school leaders have enabled pupils to take part in virtual experiences to make their learning more memorable. The pandemic has led to fewer opportunities for inter-house competitions. A key priority for next year is to embed the house system in the secondary school.

Before the pandemic, subject leaders in both the primary and secondary schools worked on improving their curriculum plans. They thought about the knowledge and skills they wanted pupils to learn, and matched this to the national curriculum.

In the secondary provision, work on the curriculum continues to evolve. Subject leaders have made some small tweaks to their plans since pupils returned to school after the third national lockdown. However, periods of partial closure have meant that you and your team have not been able to complete planned work on the curriculum. Subject leaders have clear intent for the curriculum and have a rationale

for teaching topics in the order they do. However, pupils are not so clear about how new learning is connected to previously learned knowledge. Greater clarity would enable them to better prepare for future learning. In the primary school, the sequence of pupils' learning in history and geography, including when essential knowledge will be revisited, is not as clearly defined as other subjects.

Through ongoing training, the primary school team has improved staff skills and expertise in the teaching of reading. Leaders have invested in resources for pupils which match the phonics programme. Books match pupils' decoding levels. Younger pupils take books home with them each week. Pupils in need of extra support take part in additional reading sessions which teachers plan to suit pupils' needs. These sessions are regular and short, so pupils do not miss out on their learning in other subjects. Older pupils speak with enthusiasm about the specific books and authors they enjoy.

In the secondary school, support for pupils with low attainment in reading has also improved. Teachers provide help with phonics and comprehension. This supports pupils to catch up where they have fallen behind.

External support

The local authority has provided support for your work on improving behaviour and attendance. It has facilitated links with local schools. This has been particularly helpful with remote teaching and with recent work on the marking of Year 11 assessments. This has been a two-way process. Eastbrook teachers have valued the input of colleagues from other schools, and vice versa.

Evidence

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

We visited a selection of lessons, watched the teaching of phonics, reviewed curriculum plans and looked at school improvement documentation. We also looked at the results of parent and staff surveys.

I am copying this letter to the acting co-chairs of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Barking and Dagenham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Strong
Her Majesty's Inspector