LEIGH
Primary School
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Headteacher Ofsted Letter

Dear parents and carers,

I am writing to make you aware of the imminent release of the Ofsted Inspection Report relating to the Section 5 inspection in September. This report gives an overall rating of 'Requires Improvement' with Behaviour and Personal Development being rated 'Good'.

It would be an entirely reasonable question to ask why the overall judgement has moved from a rating of Good since the previous inspection in 2014, which was maintained in the 2018 Section 8 Short inspection, to Requires Improvement. New guidelines within the Ofsted framework were put in place in 2019, post our last inspection which was based on an old framework. This framework altered the requirements of the management of curriculum, its design and implementation, as a result moving the goalposts considerably. This coupled with a difficult 18 months whereby the school did not have the capacity to continue with the usual accelerated rate of strategic development due to school leaders prioritising the pandemic response and wellbeing of pupils and staff, progress on these areas of the curriculum were not marked enough to attain a judgement of Good.

However, these new goal posts are challenges that lead schools to have increased rigour across their curriculums, clearer progressions and children that know more and can do more. As a team, we intend to move our school through these posts and beyond. Working with the school's Local Authority Advisor and other professionals in the field, it is clear Leigh Primary has a strong experienced team of professionals who welcome your encouragement and support as we move forwards with our plans for rapid school development.

Whilst this is extremely disappointing, I would like to reassure you that we have acted immediately to put measures in place and were acting prior to Ofsted's arrival as we had a clear oversight of the developments required in line with the new Framework. Our Governors have met on several occasions already and a rigorous improvement plan is in place, with very clear timescales. You will find a summary of our school development plan attached to this email.

After having only been in post as Headteacher for 12 days, along with a new Senior Leadership Team when Ofsted arrived, we are seeing this Inspection as an opportunity for reflection and the beginning to an exciting year of innovation, change and to utilise the fresh eyes of a new team to inspire and take the school forwards. We are completely confident and reassured by the targets that Ofsted have given as they mirror the actions we were already developing and indeed some we have already implemented since the inspection. We are only disappointed that due to the early arrival, we had not yet finalised our school development plan or completed reviews to show and discuss with the inspectors.

It is also important to mention that the school was praised for all areas of development that were acted upon quickly in the Summer of 2021 to ensure that the children's behaviour and mental well-being was nurtured to allow the rigour of our Curriculum developments to have impact. I was encouraged by the judgements in these areas as it is a reflection of how quickly and well the school laid its intent in these areas, implemented them and Ofsted commented upon their impact. Some examples are below:

Areas of Strength

'Staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They encourage and support pupils to be kind and considerate to others. For example, staff reward pupils who demonstrate the school's shared values of 'ACT RIGHT'.'

We reviewed the behaviour policy in July 2021 as a staff ready for implementation in September. This has contributed to the positive attitudes that Ofsted saw and will enable us to drive learning forwards in a powerful way.

In reference to ACT RIGHT – 'These values are clearly visible in the way pupils act and the choices they make. Older pupils relish opportunities to interact with younger pupils during breaktimes, demonstrating positive behaviours and relationships.'
Pupils' personal development is carefully promoted. Pupils have the opportunity to develop their talents and interests through a variety of clubs offered both during lunchtimes and after school, including football and French club. Pupils enjoy whole school assemblies that cover a wide range of relevant topics, such as democracy. They have further opportunities during each week to discuss these topics in an age appropriate way in class discussions with trusted adults.'

ACT RIGHT is a bespoke PSHE scheme that ensures we are developing the 'whole' child and children that are ready to be responsible members of society. This has been further developed this year through termly assembly themes and a new collective worship policy/procedures and class assemblies that are delivered across the school.

'Mathematics plans show clearly what is taught and how from Reception Year through to Year 6.
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There has been lots of developments in mathematics to ensure that there is clear progression using our White Rose sequencing documents and gap analysis post lockdown to ensure that all children can make rapid progress from their individual starting points. We are delighted that Ofsted recognised that our plans clearly showed this rigour for our students.

Areas for Growth

'Not all pupils are well supported to read confidently quickly. Over time, leaders have not ensured that the teaching of phonics is consistent and of high quality. Staff use a range of schemes and approaches, which leads to gaps in what pupils are taught and learn. Pupils are not always helped to select books to read that are matched to the sounds they know. Pupils who fall behind are not yet provided with sufficient time to read in school to catch up quickly.'

This area of the Ofsted inspection was related to all schools implementing a Systematic Synthetic Phonics Programme. The DfE only published this criterion in April 2021 and has been validating and approving phonic schemes since. Many schemes have been validated and the last application to validate is in February next year. Leigh was in the process of selecting a scheme as Ofsted arrived and alike many schools did not have one in place yet. Since this time, we have selected ''Little Wandle' and this scheme is already being used in Reception, Year 1 and in Year 2. It is a school wide program with catch up interventions for KS2 pupils. We will be working with other schools who are also implementing the same scheme at the same time as us and we are excited about the outcomes. It is important to note that due to not having an SSP already in place this fundamental area for development impacted the judgement made in Early Years and Leadership and Management. We are pleased that the Ofsted inspectors recognised the plans we already had in place for this key area of school development in the targets: *'Leaders should implement their plans for improving phonics teaching without delay.'*

Actions:

- The school has already purchased a new Systematic Synthetic Phonics Scheme
- The first half of staff have been trained on its intent and implementation
- The scheme is in use in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2.
- The books to accompany the scheme have arrived and are currently being processed and will be being distributed to parents before Christmas.
- Further investment has been made into online reading resources for parents and a wider selection of non-schemed books for enrichment for the younger classes will be in place by January.
- Further trained support staff are in place in KS1 to support Early reading.
- Significant training and investment has been made in the leadership of reading in KS1 and KS2 whereby we have highly qualified leaders being responsible for delivering this part of the school development plan alongside our highly qualified teaching and support staff.

'Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included across the different aspects of school life. However, not all pupils with SEND have work adapted to meet their specific needs. For example, what is taught does not always build closely enough on their prior learning and focus on the most important next steps.'

In light of such disruption over the past two years, we have identified that children have increased gaps in learning and the impact of the pandemic has led us to review our practices for SEND pupils. We are a small school with a higher than Kent Average percentage of SEND pupils. New planning for gap analysis for SEND pupils with individual provision maps is ensuring that work is further differentiated to ensure rigour and address gaps in knowledge and understanding. Those parents of children with SEND will have already received this mapping which will be reviewed termly and new targets aligned.

Actions:

- The school has reviewed the SEND action plan.
- There will be regular book scrutiny for all SEND pupils to ensure that their objectives and work is targeted towards their individual provision maps which have always been in place.
- Regular learning walks have begun to observe and provide feedback on support for SEND pupils to ensure that all staff are provided with regular feedback for professional development.
- Individual provision mapping that outlines gaps in learning, intervention and classroom support has been reviewed in terms of their intent and implementation as working documents.
- Revised ways of mapping provision and implementation has already been implemented and parents have received these documents which reflects rigorous school practice.
- Aspects of SEND support are outlined in our Pupil Premium Strategy Plan that can be accessed via this link: https://www.leighprimaryschool.com/docs/Headteacher_uploads/Provision_/Pupil_Premium_strategy_plan.pdf

'The curriculum plans for all subjects do not yet precisely outline what should be taught and when it should be taught. Pupils are not building a coherent understanding within the subjects they are taught. Leaders should carefully refine their curriculum plans to identify the specific content that is taught within each subject. Leaders should also carefully consider the order in which it is taught that pupils are supported to know more, remember more and do more as a result of the taught curriculum.'

In line with the Ofsted Framework, we are refining all curriculums across the school and are using specialists to teach areas of the curriculum that require more developed expertise such as French and Music using the schemes of ilanguages and Charanga. Science was looked at by Ofsted specifically and although not mentioned in the report was pleased that it was taught to a good standard and that our Kent Scheme of learning outlined a clear progression, was well-sequenced and was implemented effectively by our staff.

In is important to note that only Science and PE were reviewed, and curriculum plans, and work were not scrutinised by Ofsted during this inspection for other subjects aside from Mathematics. Our curriculum plans outline progression across all year groups in all strands of all subjects with knowledge, vocabulary and enquiry skills. Our plans are now weaker in PE viewed against the demands of the new Ofsted framework. We ask our PE specialist to provide a compelling and engaging sporting program, which we know staff and children alike agree is being delivered by a varied and competitive multi-sports schedule. However the new guidelines require us to review the sequencing of our provision in line more securely with pedagogical development. We have already set plans in motion to work alongside Matt Thacker to develop this program; he is an inspiring practitioner and we look forward to working more closely with him to develop our sports provision. Please see our Sports Premium investment action plan for more detail: https://www.leighprimaryschool.com/Learning/Sports-Premium-Funding/

- We have employed specialists for French and Music and are working with these practitioners to ensure refined progression in these areas of the curriculum.
- A new computing scheme has been purchased that will be implemented from January 2021.
- A detailed Sports Premium Action Plan outlines our range of developments in Physical Education.
- Humanities scheme will be implemented during the Spring Term including history, geography and RE alongside training for all staff.

'Staff have not received sufficient training to plan and deliver an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. Pupils' learning of the wider curriculum is inconsistent across the school. Leaders should provide training for all staff to help all pupils make consistently strong progress across all subject areas.'

There has been a reduction in training over the past 18 months as training has been conducted remotely, cancelled and the school has struggled with staffing issues during the pandemic. It is difficult to send staff on training when you are operating virtual and physical classrooms which led to this reduction which is now being rectified with the following action.

- All areas of development in the school will be coupled with rigorous training, monitoring and support.
- This term the focus in training the entire school in our new Systematic, Synthetic Phonics programme.
- We also have had staff attending leadership, TA training, whole staff paediatric first aid, positive handling, and annual safeguarding training.
- An online training portal for all staff and governors has been implemented.
- Regular monitoring and review will be conducted to measure the impact of this training and gap analysis used to ensure that all training needs are met.
- Training is being aligned through whole school appraisal procedures to ensure that all staff have the skills and competencies required to deliver the highest quality of education.

Finally, I would like to say on a personal note how supported I have felt moving to the role of headteacher and I wanted to assure you of my unyielding commitment and absolute faith in the Leigh Team of staff. This has been a very difficult 18 months with many unique factors playing a role in leading the school to the position it was in when Ofsted visited in September. Ofsted's role is not to unpick the mitigating factors that have had a detrimental impact on the School over this period; they are a body that acts to assess the current situation, rather than understand what has led the school here and provide feedback to move forwards. Therefore, rather than look back, I feel it is important to set our sights on the goal posts mentioned earlier.

The parent survey conducted in the Summer of 2021 was an action I undertook to begin the process of reflection and I hope the summary and overview sent last week shows how seriously the school and I take your feedback and how quickly we act with regard to school development. It is also important to recognise the positivity of the responses from parents and how happy you are with the education we provide at Leigh in particular reference to the development of the 'whole' child. On behalf of everyone, we thank you for your support as we hope to move forwards together. One member of staff described the school as 'a community within a community' - and as a community we will reach these goal posts.

I am proud of the children and how they were ambassadors of their school throughout the inspection speaking positively of their school experiences and they were a credit to you and the school. I am also proud of the staff who after such a deflating and intimidating experience are excited and ready for reform.

If you have any questions regarding the areas of development this report outlines, please email office@leigh.kent.sch.uk using the subject line Ofsted Query. We will be collating questions to provide further information to ensure that your questions are answered in full as at the moment we are unable to organise an event whereby we can answer your questions in person. I will be outside on the gate most mornings and afternoons where possible, so please feel free to come and talk to me outside and I will be happy to discuss any concerns you may have.

Kind regards,
Jenna Halfhide
Headteacher - LPS