

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr James Baguley
The Weald Church of England Primary School
Newdigate Road
Beare Green
Dorking
Surrey
RH5 4QW

Dear Mr Baguley

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of The Weald Church of England Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Julie Sackett, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 3 and 4 February 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 provide education to all pupils during the current circumstances.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 (2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for visiting schools while routine inspections remain temporarily suspended. It was additional to the usual monitoring process for schools that are judged to have serious weaknesses.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, this monitoring inspection was carried out remotely. As such, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would normally be the case during an on-site inspection. As a result, this letter provides a more limited level of assurance than our usual monitoring reports.

The inspection took place because the school was judged to have serious weaknesses at its previous section 5 inspection(s). The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in November 2018.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 on the school, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- prioritise improvements to the teaching of phonics for those pupils who are learning at home
- strengthen the curriculum by making explicit what pupils will learn in each subject and the order in which pupils will learn this.

Context

- The number of pupils on roll is declining. There are currently no pupils in Reception and one class in key stage 1.
- The executive headteacher and an assistant headteacher left in July 2020. A new headteacher took up post in September 2020. Currently an assistant headteacher is seconded to the school from another school in the trust.
- A local governing committee replaced the interim academy board in December 2020. The chair of this board took up post in January 2021. Two new governors recently joined the board.
- During the autumn, most pupils attended school and no classes were disrupted.
- Currently, overall, 37% of pupils are learning in school. 65% of vulnerable pupils and 53% of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are learning in school.
- At the time of this inspection there was no COVID-19 staff absence.

Main findings

- You have ensured that pupils continue to receive an education during this challenging period. Pupils, including those learning at home, learn a broad range of subjects. However, the school's curriculum for many subjects is not yet strong enough. In foundation subjects such as history and geography, leaders have not identified the precise knowledge pupils will learn. This is reflected in the school's curriculum for pupils learning in school as well as those pupils learning at home. Leaders had begun to address this prior to the pandemic. However, you acknowledge that there is still more work to do.
- You have made sure that pupils learning at home follow the same timetable as pupils in school. Teachers have considered carefully the routines and lessons they ask pupils to follow. Daily activities include a balance of online learning, practical and physical activities. This approach reflects the consideration leaders give to pupils' mental health and well-being.

- Leaders and teachers have adapted resources to support home learning. They provide a wide range of interesting and engaging resources for pupils to use. Leaders have adjusted the order of topics in subjects such as physical education and geography. For example, in geography, leaders have delayed teaching field studies until later in the school year.
- Teachers keep a daily check of how pupils at home are getting on. They are alert to any pupils who are not logging on to the school's learning platform and completing tasks. Leaders keep careful oversight of this. They keep in regular contact with families and follow up any concerns. This helps them to identify when they need to give extra support.
- Teachers are knowledgeable about pupils. They are very aware of those pupils who are most vulnerable and respond quickly to any concerns. A key feature of leaders' work is the close contact they maintain with families and the good relationships they have forged with them. Leaders and staff are sensitive to families' individual circumstances. When needed, they draft in support from outside agencies and enlist early help.
- Leaders have ensured that younger pupils learning at home have access to a suite of phonics resources. They keep in regular contact with parents to find out how things are going. Leaders ask parents to follow the school's planned phonics programme. However, leaders have not adapted this programme to meet the needs of all pupils. This is particularly so for pupils at an early stage of reading. Some books for these pupils include sounds and words that pupils have not yet learned. This limits the opportunities for pupils to apply their phonics skills.
- Leaders work hard to ensure that pupils with SEND receive the help and support that they need. On the whole, teachers adapt activities well to cater for pupils' needs. They give these vulnerable pupils timely feedback about their learning to help them progress. Leaders have high ambition for pupils with SEND. They work in close partnership with parents. Parents' responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, are highly positive of the school's support for pupils with SEND.
- During the current pandemic, trust leaders have provided effective challenge and support to school leaders. They have implemented a new leadership structure. Roles are now much clearer and reflect the school's needs, current context and circumstances. The new structure supports the school's leadership team in their work to provide education during the current emergency. Trust leaders have also sought to improve leaders' capacity during this challenging period. They have recently seconded an assistant headteacher from another local school from the trust. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this work.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the trust's director of education and chief executive officer, and two representatives of the local governing committee.

Inspectors met with two groups of pupils, heard some pupils read to their teachers, sampled the school's curriculum plans, including learning that is being provided remotely, and considered the minutes from trust meetings. They also took into account the 24 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 54 responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, along with parents' written comments.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Good Shepherd Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Guildford, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector