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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Emma Kerrigan Draper
Headteacher
Mount Pleasant Junior School
Mount Pleasant Road
Southampton
Hampshire
SO14 0WZ

Dear Mrs Kerrigan Draper

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Mount Pleasant Junior School

Following my remote inspection with Aimee Floyd, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 10 and 11 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 require improvement.

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 has received two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in September 2019.

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.

Context

- At the time of the previous inspection, some members of the senior leadership team had only just taken up their posts. Since then, senior leadership has been stable. There have been several changes to the teaching staff, and new governors have joined the governing body.
- Last term, approximately a quarter of pupils accessed their education remotely for a short period of time.
- At the time of this inspection, just over one in ten pupils were being educated on site. Almost all of the most vulnerable pupils and those with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) are attending.

Main findings

- Staff are united in their efforts to ensure that all pupils experience an education during this national lockdown. The headteacher's high expectations for all pupils have not been diminished by the current challenges. Leaders are passionately committed to support all pupils and their families in these exceptional times. This includes working with families to ease the challenges faced by pupils and their parents who speak English as an additional language.
- Very strong relationships have been forged between the school and the local community. Leaders have worked hard to support many pupils to work remotely by sourcing appropriate devices and providing access to the internet. Additional support is provided for pupils and parents who are finding learning at home difficult. This includes teacher videos, emails and individual video calls. Staff also carry out regular checks on the welfare of pupils who are not attending school.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have broadened the curriculum and introduced new subject planning which raises the level of challenge and carefully builds pupils' knowledge over time. Teachers have reviewed these plans to ensure that subject content is still suitably sequenced in the current circumstances. Across most subjects, teachers have made sensible choices about the ordering of topics and creatively developed new ways of delivering their curriculum plans. However, leaders have taken the decision to pause the teaching of Spanish this term. They are aware that this subject, and aspects of other subjects which require specific practical resources, will need revisiting when this period of national lockdown is over.
- Pupils working at home and those in school have access to the same curriculum. Teachers are planning activities in bespoke weekly learning packs. Pupils learning at home come with their parents each week to collect these packs, get further feedback from their teachers and any additional resources that they may need.

- Leaders prioritise reading as key to pupils' success. Pupils read a wide variety of texts and are supported to develop their vocabulary to talk about their learning. Currently, pupils who are in school are having regular reading sessions with staff. This includes support for pupils who need further practice in using their phonics skills to sound out words. Staff make sure that pupils learning at home get support for their phonics through the activities in their learning packs and through reading books matched to the sounds they are learning. Leaders have plans in place to continue to strengthen the teaching of phonics.
- Leaders have encouraged pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to attend school. The vast majority of pupils with an EHC plan are in school and receiving specific, daily support. For pupils with SEND who are learning remotely, teachers are suitably adapting learning and assessment. This is because training for staff has improved their understanding about the different needs of the pupils and what will help them to be successful in their learning. Regular communication with families through emails, phone calls or conversations in the playground provides further guidance for parents and pupils as required.
- Governors offer practical support and challenge to leaders to help ensure that the school operates safely both on site and online. Governors have clear expectations about the improvements they expect to see. They hold leaders to account to ensure the actions being taken to provide all pupils with an education during the current circumstances are effective.
- School improvement officers from the local authority and the community trust the school belongs to have worked in partnership. Together, they have supported senior leaders and teachers well with a systematic programme of professional development over the last two years. Staff have had the opportunity to work in partnership with other local schools, local universities and have had access to curriculum training. Leaders have made effective use of this support to improve reading, mathematics and the wider curriculum provision across the school.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority and Aspire Community Trust to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also looked at examples of teachers' planning and some examples of the work pupils had completed remotely. We spoke with a small group of pupils and considered the views represented in a video of pupils and parents made by the school. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 16 free-text responses, and 33 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the trustees of the Aspire Community Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry
Her Majesty's Inspector