

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



17 March 2021

Susan Preston
Headteacher
Gillingham Primary School
School Road
Gillingham
Dorset
SP8 4QR

Dear Mrs Preston

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Gillingham Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Julie Carrington, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 2 March 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 had three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in October 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:

- improve the strategic leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so that pupils' needs are identified accurately and they are supported effectively.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, there are new leaders of English, phonics and key stage 1. The leadership of mathematics was changed in September 2020.
- Across the autumn term 2020, approximately 15% of pupils had to be educated remotely for short periods.
- At the time of this inspection, around 70% of pupils are being educated at home. Approximately 87% of vulnerable pupils, and 80% of pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans are attending in person. Of the pupils with EHC plans who attend the specialist complex communication needs base, 90% are attending school.

Main findings

- You and your leadership team have made it a priority that pupils receive an education under the current circumstances. You provide devices to ensure that pupils can learn at home. You make sure that all pupils access the same curriculum, whether remotely or in school. Leaders review and improve the provision continuously.
- School leaders keep a sharp focus on reading. You have trained all staff in the teaching of phonics. Staff deliver phonics lessons daily, at school and online. For those pupils who have gaps in their phonic knowledge, you provide extra teaching. As a result, these pupils, including those in the early years, are catching up.
- Leaders of reading and mathematics check that the curriculum is taught well. In mathematics, you made a considered decision to delay the teaching of division and fractions until pupils return to school. You provide pupils with work packs and practical resources so that they learn using familiar materials at home.
- Prior to March 2020, a complete overhaul of the curriculum had begun in science, geography and history. This work has made a positive difference. Pupils know more and can remember more. They can now apply their knowledge of geography to other areas of the curriculum. However, work to develop the curriculum in other subjects has slowed due to the pandemic. You rightly intend to develop these subjects in the future.

- The majority of vulnerable pupils and children of key workers attend school. Leaders maintain effective communication between home and school. Parents appreciate the contact and support. You actively encourage pupils to attend school when necessary. As a result, the number of vulnerable pupils attending school has increased.
- You provide strong pastoral support for pupils with SEND. Pupils in the specialist communication needs base, and other pupils with EHC plans, receive provision tailored to their needs. Specific interventions, for individuals and groups of pupils, continue. However, SEND provision is not consistently effective. Work to identify SEND pupils' academic needs accurately is only just beginning. Teachers do not yet adapt the curriculum sufficiently according to these pupils' needs.
- Governors are well informed about the school's work. New systems, and recent training, have enabled them to further their knowledge and expertise. Consequently, they provide increased challenge and are more systematic when holding leaders to account.
- Leaders proactively draw on the support of external partners, including subject networks, a local mathematics hub, SEND networks, an academy trust and other schools. In recent months, the local authority has begun to provide leadership support.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, representatives of those responsible for governance and a representative of the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We looked at the work of pupils and reviewed school documentation. An inspector held discussions with pupils and listened to pupils read. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 27 free-text responses, and 39 staff questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Barraclough
Her Majesty's Inspector