

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



18 March 2021

Rebecca James  
Headteacher  
Forestdale Primary School  
Wareham Road  
Frankley  
Birmingham  
B45 0JS

Dear Mrs James

### **Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Forestdale Primary School**

Following my remote inspection with Mark Howes, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 23 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.

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 three successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in January 2019.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) 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:

- identify gaps in pupils' knowledge as quickly as possible so that teachers can use this information to plan subsequent teaching and learning
- ensure that the school returns to its usual range of subjects as soon as possible so that pupils receive their entitlement to the whole of the national curriculum
- continue to work with parents in order to increase pupils' levels of engagement with learning, whether in school or when learning remotely.

### **Context**

- Since the last inspection, a new English leader has been appointed and a parent has been elected to serve on the governing body.
- Across the autumn term 2020, a large proportion of pupils had to be educated remotely. No class 'bubbles' were sent home, but most year groups were affected due to pupils having repeated periods of self-isolation.
- At the time of this inspection, a fifth of pupils were being educated on site, with the rest learning at home. Almost all pupils who are vulnerable and a quarter of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending on site.
- At the time of this inspection, two staff were absent due to COVID-19. Leaders were managing this through their usual staff rota system.

### **Main findings**

- Following a slow start to remote learning, you and your leadership team adapted your approach to the education being offered. Work in English, mathematics, science and some foundation subjects is included in a work pack provided for all pupils. Subject leaders adapt their plans to ensure that the work provided can be completed at home. Some subjects such as computing, design technology and modern foreign languages are not currently being taught. Subject leaders are beginning to consider how to ensure that pupils get back to their usual curriculum as soon as possible.
- Since the last inspection, you have been working to put in place a more carefully sequenced curriculum. The curriculum in subjects such as science, history and music is more developed than in others. You encourage subject leaders to take ownership of their subject. They support other staff to develop their subject-specific knowledge so that they are clear about what they want pupils to know and remember. You know that there is still more work to do to ensure that all subjects are carefully planned and sequenced.

- You continue to develop what you are offering pupils for remote learning. Teachers' expectations of how much work pupils should complete have increased since last summer. You deliver work packs to pupils' homes and make phone calls to support parents in helping their children. Although more pupils are engaging with remote learning, some do not complete their work. This makes it hard for teachers to provide feedback and help pupils quickly when they are stuck. You know that there is more to do to check what pupils are learning when they are not at school. Videos and slide shows are on the school's website to support the work pupils do at home. You continue to reach out to parents to help them know how to support their children.
- A very recent delivery of laptops from the Department for Education is helping to overcome one of the barriers to providing remote education. You are now offering all pupils two live teaching sessions each day. Pupils in school join in so that they can see their friends and do not miss out. Teachers are learning how to use an online platform to provide more direct teaching, such as guided reading sessions. This work is in the very early stages of development.
- You have made significant changes to the way in which reading is taught from the moment pupils join the school. A consistent approach to teaching phonics is now in place. This is helping the youngest pupils to learn their sounds more rapidly. All staff have been trained to teach phonics. You have put in place a system so that pupils can change their reading books regularly while they are learning at home. Daily phonics lessons recently started online, and pupils are benefiting from this live interaction with their teacher.
- Vulnerable pupils and those of key workers use the same work packs while they are in school. Some of them only attend part time and this helps them to carry on with their learning at home.
- Teachers adapt the work that is sent home for pupils with SEND. Staff, including the special educational needs coordinator, make regular phone calls to check how these pupils are doing. Some pupils have daily contact with school to help them from falling further behind. Pupils in school benefit from extra one-to-one and small-group support. Leaders help families to access online appointments with external agencies. Leaders do as much as they can to make sure that pupils with SEND get the support they need.
- Governors meet regularly with senior leaders to review the curriculum and check what is offered each week for remote learning. They use the milestones in the school development plan to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions. As a result of working closely with a local authority adviser, governors are becoming more effective in developing their skills to hold leaders to account.
- Leaders benefit from high-quality external support and challenge from a local authority adviser. This has meant that leaders have quickly identified areas for improvement, for example raising expectations of what pupils can do.

Links with an English hub are supporting the improvements in the teaching of phonics and early reading. This is helping leaders to focus on the key priorities for improvement.

### **Evidence**

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, 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 also visited an online phonics lesson and heard three pupils read. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including four free-text responses, and 21 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 Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Harwood  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**