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Robert Jones
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Dear Mr Jones

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rednal Hill Junior School

Following my remote inspection with Heather Fearn, 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 received two successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in December 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.

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

- carefully consider the knowledge that pupils should learn across the curriculum. Leaders and teachers should pay close attention to what pupils need to know already, so that they can learn and use new content. This particularly applies to Year 3 pupils as they join from their previous schools
- refine the texts that pupils read across the curriculum so that they encounter the specific knowledge and vocabulary that will allow them to make further progression in reading
- extend training in phonics so that even more staff can offer pupils ongoing support with their early reading.

Context

- Since the previous section 5 inspection, there have been several staff changes, including the appointment of two assistant headteachers. In September 2020, four newly qualified teachers joined the school.
- Across the autumn term 2020, 75% of pupils were educated remotely at some point. One class in Year 4 experienced two periods of isolation. Several pupils have had to undertake repeated periods of self-isolation.
- At the time of this inspection, approximately 20% of pupils are being educated on site. The school has identified a group of pupils who have additional vulnerabilities. Of this group, 43% are currently attending school. Twenty-two percent of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are also receiving lessons in school. No staff are currently self-isolating.

Main findings

- Despite the considerable challenge of the last year, leaders and governors remain committed to improving the quality of education for pupils. The school continues to prioritise curriculum development. Leaders' actions have brought about even greater clarity to what it is that pupils should learn.
- Leaders are receptive and want the very best for children. The leaders that we met throughout the inspection are keen to drive forward further improvements.
- In September 2019 you launched a new curriculum. Your plans for this revised curriculum more fully prioritise the knowledge that pupils should learn in each of the national curriculum subjects. You have clearly identified what it is you want pupils to learn in most subjects. You have made particularly strong headway in English, mathematics and science.

- Some of your curriculum development has been hampered by the impact of COVID-19. Not all of the curriculum plans take enough account of the curriculum content that pupils have learnt in their previous schools. This is particularly the case in Year 3. You are not teaching some aspects of languages and music so that you can prioritise other curriculum areas. However, you plan to resume these subjects fully in the summer term.
- Though your plans for English have developed, there is scope to further refine the texts that are chosen to promote pupils' comprehension and vocabulary. Leaders are keen to more fully consider the range and richness of texts and maximise the time pupils spend reading. There is also a need for even greater clarity about how, for example, a text in Year 3 builds readiness for what pupils will read in Year 4 and beyond.
- You have recruited staff who have expertise in the teaching of phonics. The majority of pupils with gaps in their early reading, therefore, have the support they need to catch up. Pupils in school, and those working remotely, receive a programme of structured additional support. However, this expertise is limited to specific adults. Consequently, support for pupils can sometimes be less well targeted.
- The remote learning offer for pupils is impressive. You have listened carefully to feedback from families. As a result of this feedback, you have adapted your offer over time. Importantly, your remote learning is aligned to your school curriculum. You adapt the length of sessions and the amount of content covered. Senior leaders work with teachers to identify any key content that has not been fully remembered by pupils. You plan to prioritise this content when all pupils return to school.
- You offer vulnerable pupils and those with SEND extra support. For example, you deliver additional resources to pupils' homes. You also offer families extra bespoke support. You understand the needs of these pupils well. You continue to work with external agencies to ensure pupils' needs are met.
- Governors are skilled and know the school well. They keep a close eye on school development despite the challenges of COVID-19. Some governors have specific responsibility for oversight of the curriculum. They are clear about the actions that have been taken to address priorities. Governors are particularly knowledgeable about remote learning. They have been able to offer specific challenge and support in this area.
- Leaders value the support of the local authority advisor. This support has been focused on curriculum development. The advisor has specifically supported subject leaders to consider the most important priorities in their given areas.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, pupils, 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 looked at curriculum plans, information on the school's website and reviewed a range of pre-recorded lessons. We looked at responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 17 free-text responses, and 35 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

Jonathan Keay
Her Majesty's Inspector