

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



23 March 2021

Sue Birch
Headteacher
Birk Hill Infant and Nursery School
Chestnut Avenue
Eckington
Derbyshire
S21 4BE

Dear Mrs Birch

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Birk Hill Infant and Nursery School

Following my remote inspection with Steve Varnam, 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 November 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:

- develop curriculum plans so that teachers can easily identify the knowledge they want pupils to learn and remember
- widen the expertise of the governing body so that governors can more effectively hold leaders to account
- improve communication with parents and carers so that they are clear about what their children are expected to learn across the curriculum.

Context

- There have been significant changes to leadership since the previous inspection. A key stage one leader and leader responsible for mathematics were appointed in September 2020. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) joined the school in January 2020. Four governors have resigned. There are several vacancies on the governing body.
- Very few pupils had to learn from home during the autumn term. No class 'bubbles' had to isolate.
- Currently, around half of all pupils are working from home. Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and all vulnerable pupils attend on site.
- There have been a small number of staffing absences due to COVID-19. Leaders have covered the absences with their own staff as well as with supply staff.

Main findings

- Leaders have taken the necessary actions to ensure that pupils, including those with SEND, receive education at this time. They have listened to the views of parents and carers to help improve the remote education on offer. However, a significant minority of parents report that they are unclear about what their children are expected to know and remember at this time.
- Prior to the school partially closing on 23 March 2020, leaders responsible for English were receiving training arranged by the local English hub. They were using this training to improve the quality of the curriculum for reading and phonics. The approach to teaching phonics is more effective than it previously was. Pupils read books that help them to practise the sounds they have been learning. They read with increasing accuracy.
- Leaders have started to improve the curriculum in most subjects. However, some plans do not yet set out the knowledge pupils should learn and when

they should learn it. Not all teachers understand what subject knowledge they need to teach so that pupils know and remember more each year.

- Leaders have trained staff so that the curriculum can be taught remotely. Teachers deliver some online lessons to check that pupils understand the work set. Teachers direct pupils to online materials to support the study of a wider range of subjects.
- Leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils receive more help at school and when working remotely. They provide pupils with electronic devices so they can join in with online learning. Teachers speak regularly with pupils and parents to check on the well-being of the whole family. Pupils who have fallen behind continue to receive support, particularly in reading. Pupils receive extra lessons in phonics as well as additional reading time with staff. However, some of this extra support for reading, has not been available to pupils working remotely.
- Leaders and teachers adapt the curriculum so that pupils with SEND continue to access the support they are used to. For example, in English, some pupils with SEND learn important vocabulary before the start of lessons. They use this knowledge to help them to understand the texts that they read during lessons. Teachers break information down into smaller steps for some pupils with SEND. Pupils know what is expected of them as they complete tasks at school and working remotely.
- Governors are a committed team. They check that leaders continue to provide pupils with education at this time. However, due to recent resignations from the governing body, governors do not have enough expertise to hold leaders to account as well as they have done in the past.
- The local authority provides support and challenge to help leaders address weaker areas of the curriculum. For example, it encourages links with the local English hub. Leaders use these links to help them improve the curriculum for reading. The local authority has plans to support the recruitment of new governors to help widen the expertise of the governing body.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, the SENCo, two senior leaders, two subject leaders, a member of the governing body and a representative of the local authority, to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also checked a sample of lesson materials used for remote education and listened to pupils read in Years 1 and 2. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online

questionnaire, Parent View, including 17 free-text responses, and 13 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 Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Damien Turrell
Her Majesty's Inspector