

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Steven Rose
Executive Headteacher
Millbrook Primary School
School Lane
Wantage
Oxfordshire
OX12 7LB

Dear Mr Rose

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Millbrook Primary School

Following my remote inspection with James Broadbridge, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 16 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.

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 January 2020.

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:

- develop the curriculum across all subjects, ensuring that knowledge is coherently sequenced from early years through to Year 6.

Context

- There have been no changes to staffing, leadership or governance since the previous section 5 inspection.
- During the spring term up until 8 March 2021 when the school was open to all pupils, approximately 75% of pupils were educated at home. During this time, 77% of vulnerable pupils and 43% of pupils with education, health and care plans were attending on site.
- At the time of this inspection, almost all pupils were attending on site. A small number of pupils were attending on a part-time timetable.

Main findings

- Leaders and governors are providing pupils with a comprehensive education in the current circumstances. Since the section 5 inspection, and despite the restrictions of COVID-19, leaders have resolutely continued their work to improve the quality of education for pupils. Throughout the recent partial school closure, teachers set pupils work that was matched to the school's intended curriculum. Staff provided carefully considered support to pupils working at home as well as those in school, including vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils have made a smooth transition back into school. Pupils are pleased to be in classrooms and their attendance is high. Parents are positive about the education provided in recent months and leaders' work to improve the school.
- Leaders' work to review planning in all subjects is securely under way. Leaders know that there is more work needed to develop the early years curriculum and planning in some subjects, such as history. They have successfully established a consistent approach to teaching in all year groups. However, further work is needed to consider the content that pupils need to learn and the order in which this is taught in some subjects.
- Teachers are in the process of checking what pupils have learned and remembered across the curriculum. Leaders recognise that further adaptations to some subjects may be necessary to help pupils learn better in the current circumstances. For example, pupils' levels of fitness are not as good as they were at the start of the year and some pupils are not remembering what they have learned as well as they should.
- Leaders continue to give reading a high priority. They have implemented a phonics programme to support the systematic teaching of reading. Well-

trained staff have delivered daily phonics sessions online and in school to those pupils who need help to catch up with their reading. This has helped younger pupils learn to read confidently. Pupils have access to books that help them practise the sounds they are learning. Leaders have carefully considered a diverse range of texts that teachers read or recommend to pupils to enhance their understanding of the world.

- Leaders are ambitious for pupils with SEND and ensure that they have the same access to the curriculum as their peers. They have communicated well with the families of these pupils to support their transition back into school. Leaders are working effectively with external agencies to make sure that the small number of pupils who are currently on a part-time timetable quickly return to school full time. Teachers and support staff make suitable adaptations where appropriate so that these pupils can learn successfully.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and priorities. They work closely with school leaders and the trust. They offer an appropriate balance of support and challenge to leaders. Governors are well informed and assure themselves about the actions the school is taking to improve the quality of education for all pupils. This includes keeping a sharp focus on provision for vulnerable pupils and those with SEND.
- The trust is providing valuable expertise and resources to the school and offers specialist training in subjects such as music and computing. The trust also contributes to the pastoral support provided by the school for vulnerable pupils at 'The Nest' provision on site. Staff feel well supported. They are clear about their roles and happy in their work. One leader commented that, 'they (senior leaders and the trust) nurture our talents and potential and see us in a way we don't see ourselves.'

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders, curriculum leaders, the chief executive officer and director of learning of Vale Academy Trust, pupils and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 39 free-text responses, and 45 staff questionnaires as well as the school's own recent parental questionnaire.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the Vale Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Frances Nation
Her Majesty's Inspector