

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



20 April 2021

Steve Beynon
Head of school
Minerva Primary School
Outer Circle
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 2BU

Dear Mr Beynon

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Minerva Primary school

Following my remote inspection with Stewart Gale, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 18 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 have serious weaknesses.

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 was judged to have serious weaknesses at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in May 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:

- implement ambitious curriculum plans in every subject that enable pupils to gain the depth of knowledge they need to be well prepared for their next stage of education.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, there have been some changes to teaching staff. The school's class structure has changed to four classes and a Nursery. Currently, the early years foundation stage accounts for 35% of the school's population.
- When the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term, approximately 90% of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) were attending on site. Overall, 55% of pupils were educated at home.
- At the time of the inspection 97% of pupils were attending on site.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan has increased markedly to just above 10%.

Main findings

- Too few pupils engaged in remote education during the first national lockdown. You strengthened the school's remote education plans to make sure that this was not repeated. From January 2021, almost all pupils working at home completed the work set for them. This is helping pupils' transition back to school in March 2021. You have clear plans in place to provide remote education for any pupils who need to self-isolate.
- You and other leaders are working on the right things. You are making important changes to increase the breadth of knowledge that you expect pupils to know. There is now a new curriculum that covers every national curriculum subject. However, due to COVID-19, it is taking more time to implement it. So, improvements to the curriculum are more evident in reading, writing and mathematics than in other subjects. Pupils are very clear that the teaching in English and mathematics is helping them to know more and remember more.
- In the early years, including the Nursery, staff make precise checks on what children know and can do. As such, they are prioritising children's early language skills, their physical development and their personal, social and emotional development. Knowledgeable staff are supporting children well. As a result, more children are sustaining their conversations and speaking in sentences. There are lots of opportunities for children to enjoy listening to, talking about, and acting out, the stories that staff read aloud to them.

- All staff have a precise focus on improving pupils' reading. Pupils at the early stages of learning to read, regardless of their age, are getting specific help and support. As a result, more pupils are reading words and sentences with greater accuracy than before. Your new approach to teaching reading in Years 3 to 6 is improving pupils' understanding of what they read.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, pupils have considerable gaps in their knowledge. At the beginning of each unit of work teachers are making important checks to find out what pupils know and remember. Teachers are adapting their plans to include the most important concepts that teaching did not cover in previous years. At the same time, teachers are making headway in helping pupils gain new, and age appropriate, knowledge. You know that immediate work is needed to further overhaul curriculum plans.
- The SEND coordinator and the trust's behaviour leader assess pupils' needs accurately. Well trained staff are providing appropriate support for the most vulnerable pupils and those pupils with the most complex needs. They work closely with external agencies. As such, pupils who need extra emotional and academic support receive the additional help and therapies they need.
- A 'link' trustee and the deputy CEO now hold school leaders to account. This improved system is beginning to pay off. As such, trustees have a better insight into the impact of school leaders' current work. Nonetheless, trustees know that many pupils have considerable gaps in their knowledge because the school's curriculum development work is at an early stage.
- There is a clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities between the trust staff who help with school improvement initiatives and those who evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work. A director of teaching and learning is bolstering leadership well. The trust is providing much subject support, including network meetings for subject leaders. External support from English and mathematics hubs and consultants are improving teachers' subject knowledge well.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, other senior leaders and trust staff, including trustees, the CEO and deputy CEO to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also reviewed documents provided by the school, including pupils' work, curriculum plans, minutes of trust meetings, and various reports documenting the actions and impact of internal and external support. We talked to a group of pupils and observed an early language development and reading group at work. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including nine free-text responses, and considered 27 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Redstart Learning Partnership multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington
Her Majesty's Inspector