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22 April 2021

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Dear Miss Baker

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Cape Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Samantha Ingram, 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 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 June 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:

- ensure that the phonics programme is delivered consistently well, including in the early years, so that all children hear and pronounce the letter sounds accurately.

Context

- Since the previous inspection, both the staff team and the governing body have largely remained the same. In September 2020, an experienced governor took on the role of chair of the governing body.
- Approximately 90% of pupils were educated at home in the spring term before the school reopened to all pupils. Most vulnerable pupils and those pupils with education, health and care plans were educated on site during that time.
- At the time of this inspection, 95% of pupils were attending school. A small number of pupils were isolating and continuing their education remotely.

Main findings

- Since the previous inspection in June 2019, leaders have focused on developing the curriculum. They have reviewed the curriculum plans to check how concepts are taught and whether pupils are remembering their learning. Due to the disruption in learning because of the COVID-19 restrictions, staff are identifying the knowledge and skills that pupils have not learned remotely during this time. For example, staff are prioritising the teaching of the practical aspects of science. Currently in Year 4, pupils are making circuits to improve their knowledge and understanding of electricity.
- Staff are checking what pupils have learned and remembered across the curriculum. This includes asking pupils questions, devising quizzes and setting more formal tests. Leaders and staff are using the assessments to make adaptations to the usual curriculum. They are identifying the essential knowledge that pupils need for future learning. In mathematics, staff have started to provide additional teaching to help pupils improve their understanding of fractions.
- Leaders place a high priority on the teaching of reading. During the COVID-19 restrictions, pupils were able to access online reading resources. Leaders introduced an element of competition to enthuse pupils to read more often. Pupils read regularly and leaders have bought new books to encourage a love of reading. Daily phonics sessions are timetabled to help pupils learn the letter sounds. During the period when schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions, these phonics lessons were delivered online. However, staff do not consistently pronounce letter sounds precisely, which causes confusion for the pupils.

- During the COVID-19 restrictions, teachers tailored work to the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Paper packs and resources, such as exercise books and scissors, were given out so that pupils could access their work. Leaders have ensured that pupils continue to receive speech and language and other therapies, both in person and remotely.
- Leaders and teachers meet regularly to discuss the progress of pupils with SEND. Areas for additional teaching and learning are identified and leaders have clear plans to support these pupils now they have returned to school.
- The small number of pupils who are not currently attending school continue to be supported by the school's remote teaching. Lessons are regularly updated on the school website for these pupils to access while they are self-isolating. Leaders ensured that all pupils were able to access online lessons through the distribution of laptops and other resources. Leaders have worked closely with parents and carers to improve how remote education is delivered, for example making it easier for pupils to ask questions to their teachers.
- Governors have found ways to continue to meet and make sure that they can undertake their roles during this time. Remote meetings with the headteacher and other leaders mean that governors have been able to check that pupils are well looked after. Leaders have kept governors informed of the changes to the school's curriculum.
- The local authority is continuing to support leaders. Support has been given on the appropriate use of additional teaching for pupils with SEND. The local hub of the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics has helped in the development of the mathematics curriculum. School staff have been supported to improve the teaching of mathematics.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, 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 looked at a range of documentation, including curriculum plans. We heard pupils from Reception read and viewed pre-recorded lessons. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including five free-text responses, and 32 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 Sandwell. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Adam Vincent
Her Majesty's Inspector