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Deborah Boekestein
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Dear Miss Boekestein

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Infant School

Following my remote inspection with Jackie Stillings, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), and Garry White HMI, of your school on 30 and 31 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 initially carried out remotely. However, the inspection moved on site on 31 March due to concerns about safeguarding.

The inspection took place because the school was judged to require improvement at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in January 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.

Safeguarding is effective

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

- ensure that pupils' reading books better match their knowledge of letter sounds.

Context

- The assistant headteacher, the chair of governors and several other governors all joined the school after the last inspection.
- Two fifths of pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term. All vulnerable pupils and four fifths of those with an education, health and care plan attended on site.
- At the time of this inspection, all pupils were attending on site.

Main findings

- You and other leaders have helped pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to return to school confidently. Pupils have settled well. You ensure that pupils study their usual subjects. You check that the changes teachers are making to any subject planning are well considered and enable pupils to catch up with any missed learning quickly.
- Prior to March 2020, you and other leaders had improved the curriculum. For example, you made it clear, in all subjects, what knowledge pupils will learn. You and other leaders continue to improve the curriculum successfully. Subject leaders provide more effective leadership in their responsibilities. You and other leaders have led training to enable teachers to understand the importance of teaching each subject in order, so that pupils can build on their learning over time.
- Teachers have reviewed carefully what learning pupils, including vulnerable pupils, have missed or forgotten over the past year. They give priority to teaching pupils the essential knowledge that they identify is needed in each subject. Staff are re-teaching some previous units of work, as well as adapting curriculum plans for current or future work. Staff give pupils frequent opportunities to be physically active, to read, to talk about their learning across all subjects and to practise using their mathematical knowledge to solve problems.
- Prior to the pandemic you began changing the way that staff teach phonics. You, and other leaders, are using the expertise and guidance from another local school to help you to improve the teaching of early reading further. Staff have assessed which letter sounds pupils remember from previous teaching.

Staff are re-teaching some phonics knowledge. They give pupils, including some with SEND, extra practice in recognising and combining letter sounds in words. However, at times, the reading books that pupils are given to practise their reading skills are too difficult for them. This means that some pupils are not able to practise the letter sounds that they already know. This stops them from consolidating their learning.

- During the periods when the school was closed to most pupils, you and the staff gave pupils enough work to complete at home. Staff provided parents and carers with extra support where needed. You have made sure that pupils, parents and staff are ready to move to remote education in case of any future restrictions or if any individual pupils need to self-isolate in the coming months.
- You are ambitious in your plans to support pupils with SEND. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and early years SENCo support staff effectively to make sure that pupils' needs are met. This includes staff spotting children's difficulties in speech, communication and language in the Nursery and Reception classes. Both SENCos make good use of advice from different agencies for supporting staff's work with pupils.
- Governors increasingly ask challenging questions of you and other leaders to enable them to monitor the work of the school. They check that the support given to vulnerable pupils and those with SEND is effective. Governors double check how leaders ensure that teachers address gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- You make that sure staff receive regular safeguarding training. You and staff are vigilant to any behaviour or comments made by pupils which may suggest they are at risk of harm. For instance, staff know what the signs are which show a pupil may be neglected or radicalised. You and the staff act quickly to protect pupils. You and other leaders make sure that children in the early years are safe. Pupils told us that they feel safe at the school.
- You and other leaders make effective use of local authority support to improve the school. You have also used the expertise of other schools, for instance to improve staff's delivery of the mathematics curriculum at Inglewood. You make sure that subject leaders use information provided by national subject associations to improve the school's curriculum.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely on the first day and on site for the second day. We spoke with you, other 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 and to evaluate safeguarding.

We checked a sample of school policies and reviewed evidence of leaders' checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils. We considered information about the training completed by staff. We looked at 31 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 31 free-text responses, and 34 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 Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector