

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



29 April 2021

Seren Hathway
Headteacher
Whaley Bridge Primary School
Buxton Road
Whaley Bridge
High Peak
Derbyshire
SK23 7HX

Dear Mrs Hathway

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Whaley Bridge Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Caroline Poole, Seconded Inspector, of your school on 24 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in November 2018.

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:

- review the recently implemented curriculum, with subject leaders, to ensure that plans show what pupils need to know in each subject as they progress through the school
- refine the approach to the teaching of phonics so that all pupils achieve well.

Context

- Since the last inspection, both a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed, taking up their roles in November 2020. The deputy headteacher is the former headteacher. A new chair and vice-chair of the governing body have been appointed from the start of this academic year, along with two new governors. A teaching assistant has left their position, with a new member of staff being appointed in their place.
- During the spring term, when the school was only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions, a large majority of pupils were educated at home. Most of the pupils who have an education, health and care plan were educated on site. A large majority of vulnerable pupils were also educated on site.
- Currently, all pupils are attending on site.
- A very small proportion of staff were absent due to COVID-19 at the time of the inspection.

Main findings

- Prior to the first national lockdown in March 2020, senior leaders introduced a new curriculum that was delivered to pupils. While this has continued to be implemented, leaders are beginning to check that it continues to meet the needs of pupils.
- The new senior leadership team has identified that a review is required of the content of each subject and the order in which it is taught. This is to provide clarity in terms of the knowledge that pupils are learning in each year group in every subject.
- Senior leaders have enacted a programme of assessment to find out where gaps may have emerged in pupils' knowledge following the delivery of the new curriculum. Leaders have found that pupils need to develop stamina and provide closer attention to presenting their thoughts in writing. This is so that they can produce more detailed and neatly presented work. Adaptations are needed to the curriculum in science and design technology in the short term. These are to cover curriculum content that pupils were not able to access at

home, due to a lack of the resources required to support them in their learning.

- Senior leaders have promoted the importance of reading for pleasure. Reading is a high priority in the school. When pupils were learning at home, teachers ensured that during the most recent lockdown pupils had access to the books that were matched to the phonic sounds that they knew. Nonetheless, some gaps have emerged in pupils' knowledge in phonics. Senior leaders have been proactive in commissioning an external review of the approach to the way that phonics is taught to identify how this can be improved further.
- 'Walking the Pennine Way Challenge' was one of the learning projects that parents and pupils cited as capturing their interest when the curriculum was delivered remotely to most pupils earlier this term. This is indicative of how the new leadership team has tried to present its curriculum offer with a focus on the local area at its heart. School leaders have ensured that the same curriculum has been delivered to pupils irrespective of whether they accessed this at school or at home. Parents express how well the school has supported their children's learning at home by making it accessible, engaging and interesting.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who access the specialist provision, have continued to receive an education that focuses on meeting their specific needs. The curriculum programme is personalised to ensure that pupils' learning is tailored to support them in meeting their targets within their education, health and care plan. Responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, convey the high level of satisfaction with the school's support for pupils with SEND.
- Vulnerable pupils have accessed a relevant range of interventions to support their learning beyond the typical teaching they receive during lessons.
- The governing body has overseen the changes to the leadership structure while ensuring that pupils have continued to receive education throughout the pandemic. Governors are ambitious for pupils to achieve well academically and in their personal development. They know the school and the community it serves well. Governors are committed to ensuring that through the curriculum, pupils develop a strong understanding of the heritage of the community and area which it serves. Governors hold leaders to account for the implementation of improvement plans and the extent to which this has a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- The local authority has kept a close eye on the work of the school since the last inspection. It has supported the leader responsible for mathematics, who has implemented a new approach to the teaching of the subject. Teachers consider that this has helped them to present learning in a way that has

meant that pupils achieve better. The local authority intends to support the school further in reviewing the curriculum offer.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you; the deputy headteacher; the leaders responsible for pupils with SEND; the leader responsible for mathematics; three teachers; three governors, including the chair and vice-chair; a group of pupils; and a representative from the local authority to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also listened to pupils reading to an adult. We looked at responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 41 free-text responses, and 23 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

David Carter
Her Majesty's Inspector