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29 April 2021

Janine Arrowsmith
Head of School
Green Meadow Primary School
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Dear Miss Arrowsmith

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Green Meadow Primary School

Following my remote inspection with Janet Pearce, Her Majesty's Inspector, of your school on 30 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 at its previous section 5 inspections. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in October 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 all staff receive high-quality training in teaching pupils at the early stages of reading and writing
- continue supporting subject leaders in their role so that they are clearer about the essential knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn from Reception through to Year 6.

Context

- You became acting head of school in January 2020, having previously been the deputy headteacher. In April 2020, your post was made permanent. Towards the end of the summer term 2020, staff were appointed internally for the roles of deputy headteacher, early years leader and, later in the autumn term of 2020, assistant headteacher. The executive headteacher, who oversees all the schools in the trust, is now the deputy chief executive officer (CEO).
- Nearly 60% of pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils earlier this term. Around 60% of vulnerable pupils and 65% of pupils with an education, health and care plan were attending on site.
- At the time of this inspection, just over 90% of pupils were attending on site. Some pupils are isolating and are continuing their education at home.
- Recently, the trust decided to close the school early on Fridays. Leaders did not want staff to teach across 'bubbles' when teachers had their planning, preparation and assessment time. This decision is currently under review. Most pupils receive remote education during the Friday afternoon, with some pupils remaining in school.

Main findings

- During the pandemic, leaders have gone the extra mile in ensuring all pupils receive an education. They removed any digital barriers for families so that all pupils could access daily live lessons. Leaders and the trust rigorously monitored pupils' engagement to make sure all pupils were learning. In addition, staff prepared bespoke support for pupils who needed extra help. Nearly all parents are positive about the school's current educational provision.
- The trust prioritised implementing a well-sequenced programme of personal, social, health and economic education to serve pupils well with what they are living through. Everybody is clear on the school's non-discriminatory ethos which underpins the curriculum and is deepening pupils' personal development.

- Leaders have started to tackle the improvements that were needed in the wider curriculum. They are ensuring that foundation subjects are timetabled appropriately. They have supported subject leaders to develop new curriculum plans in art and design and technology. COVID-19 has hampered leaders' work in developing modern foreign languages (MFL). Teachers are, however, ready to deliver MFL in the summer term.
- To check where pupils are as they return to school, teachers have used assessments in English and mathematics to identify what pupils have remembered. In mathematics, teachers are prioritising more time on pupils' fluency in number. They are ensuring that pupils' spoken language is promoted in lessons and they are helping to quicken the pace when pupils write. However, in other subjects, leaders are not secure in their understanding of the essential knowledge that pupils need year by year. This makes it difficult for teachers to pinpoint the gaps that need to be addressed first.
- Leaders are passionate in promoting a love of reading in pupils. This starts by teaching pupils how to read through a well-chosen phonics programme. When pupils were learning remotely, leaders made sure they had access to the reading books that go with the programme. Nonetheless, on the full return to school, leaders have identified that nearly a third of pupils have fallen behind in phonics. They are making sure that staff are providing daily intensive support to help these pupils catch up quickly. However, staff teaching older pupils have not been expertly trained to teach phonics. This means that some pupils are not getting effective support in their early reading and writing skills.
- Currently, some pupils are learning from home. Teachers are providing recorded lessons and paper packs for pupils, so they do not fall behind with what is happening in school.
- Leaders have rightly focused on improving the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This now means that all pupils with SEND are taught in the classroom, rather than before where some were taught separately. Leaders are more astute in selecting interventions, where needed, that will help pupils catch up. During the pandemic, they ensured that vulnerable pupils had more personalised teaching in smaller groups and continued to get the support they needed from external agencies.
- Governors know the school well. They ask pertinent questions to hold leaders to account. They have played an active part in monitoring how leaders were delivering the curriculum to pupils learning from home. Insightful curriculum reports from leaders enable trustees and governors to carry out their duties effectively.
- Trust leaders are highly skilled in knowing the right steps leaders must take to improve the quality of education. An external coach offers strong support to

develop teachers' confidence and skills in delivering the new curriculum. The trust recognises that more work is still needed to support subject leaders in checking that pupils are learning a well-sequenced curriculum and how pupils are remembering what is taught.

- The decision to close the school early on a Friday is not in the best interests of pupils. Leaders' actions are reducing pupils' access to face-to-face teaching of the curriculum and being in school full time.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to you, the senior leadership team, the CEO and deputy CEO, representatives from the trust's regional governing body, a teaching coach providing external support, staff and pupils to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We looked at responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including 49 free-text responses, and 37 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of trustees and the CEO of the Excelsior trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Broadbridge
Her Majesty's Inspector