

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



6 May 2021

Ryan Mugan
Headteacher
Eccleston Mere Primary School
Saleswood Avenue
Eccleston
St Helens
Merseyside
WA10 5NX

Dear Mr Mugan

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Eccleston Mere Primary School

Following my remote inspection with John Tomlinson, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 25 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 was judged to require improvement at its previous section 5 inspection. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in November 2017.

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 curriculum plans in all subjects build on the learning that takes place in the early years
- overcome the delays caused by the pandemic to implement new curriculum plans in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Context

- When the school was last inspected, the deputy headteacher was the acting headteacher. You were appointed as the new headteacher in April 2019. Both the chair and the vice chair of the governing body have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- Approximately three quarters of pupils were educated at home when the school was closed to most pupils at the start of the spring term 2021. During this time, three quarters of vulnerable pupils and most of the pupils with an education, health and care plan attended school on site.
- At the time of this inspection, almost all pupils were attending school on site.
- The deputy headteacher was absent at the time of this inspection. The assistant headteacher was temporarily acting as deputy headteacher. A small number of staff were absent due to COVID-19. These absences were being covered internally by the school's staff.

Main findings

- Since your appointment, you have worked with staff, governors and the local authority to improve the school. You have begun to improve curriculum planning in all subjects. You have developed how teachers check pupils' progress through the curriculum. During the most recent period when the school was closed to most pupils, you improved the way that teachers delivered education to pupils learning at home. This has helped pupils return to school with fewer gaps in their knowledge.
- Before the pandemic, you focused on developing subject leaders' expertise. This helped all leaders to redesign the curriculum plans for their subject areas. Across all subjects, it is now clear what pupils will learn and when they will learn it. These plans build on pupils' prior knowledge from Year 1 to Year 6. However, the plans do not build on children's prior learning from their time in early years.
- Since all pupils returned to school, teachers have checked what they have remembered from previous learning. In mathematics, older pupils found learning fractions and decimals at home tricky. The mathematics leader has

adapted the curriculum to give these pupils more time to learn this subject content. Across the school, teachers have identified that pupils are not as fluent in mathematics as they were before the most recent national lockdown. You have introduced four extra mathematics lessons each week to help pupils catch up quickly on missed learning.

- Some pupils have missed learning in subjects such as computing. This is because they did not have access to specialist resources at home when the school was closed to most pupils. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 did not have the software they needed. Teachers have adjusted their plans to teach this missed learning. Many younger pupils have used tablet devices at home for a lengthy period. Teachers have adapted their plans to give these pupils more time to practise their mouse control. These changes mean that new curriculum plans in subjects other than English and mathematics will take longer to put in place than originally planned.
- The teaching of reading has a high priority in the school. Following each of the partial school closures, teachers adjusted the phonics programme to help pupils with gaps in their phonics knowledge to catch up. These gaps were most noticeable for pupils in Year 1. You have introduced a whole-school approach to help pupils become expert readers. Pupils are now reading a wider range of books. You ensure that pupils read regularly to adults in school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and vulnerable pupils read more often, for example when reading instructions for baking.
- You and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) keep a keen eye on the progress of all pupils, including vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND. Together you support and challenge staff to ensure that they are doing all they can to meet pupils' needs. This includes training staff to support pupils emotionally, as well as academically. The SENCo has strong working relationships with staff, pupils, parents, carers and other professionals. This helps everyone play a part to put in place detailed support plans for each pupil with SEND.
- You keep the governing body well informed about the work of the school community. Governors make regular checks on how you and other leaders are meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND. They also check on staff's workload and their emotional well-being. Governors ask you and other leaders challenging questions about the quality of the curriculum. In this way, governors know what the school does well and what needs to improve.
- The local authority supports you and other leaders well. They have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and any areas for development. The local authority has helped you to develop the expertise of subject leaders. Support from the local authority and the mathematics hub has made a considerable contribution to recent improvements in mathematics.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We spoke to 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.

We looked at a wide range of documentation, including curriculum plans and minutes of governing body meetings. We talked to pupils and observed a Reception-aged child and pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read to a trusted adult. We looked at 149 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 42 free-text responses, and 43 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 St Helens. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Stillings
Her Majesty's Inspector