

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



25 May 2021

Emma Kerrigan-Draper
Mount Pleasant Junior School
Mount Pleasant Road
Southampton
Hampshire
SO14 0WZ

Dear Mrs Kerrigan-Draper

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mount Pleasant Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 5 May 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring inspection 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 improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- fully embed the recent improvements to the teaching of phonics and reading across the school
- develop provision in languages, computing and music by applying the same effective approaches used to improve curriculum planning in other subjects
- ensure that all relevant policies and the required information in relation to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are up to date on the school's website.

Context

When the previous section 5 inspection took place in September 2019, some members of the senior leadership team had only just taken up their posts. Since then, senior leadership has been stable. There have been several changes to the teaching staff and new governors have joined the governing body.

Main findings

You and your leadership team have responded effectively to the outcome of the previous section 5 inspection and share a passion to achieve the best for pupils and the local community. Senior leaders are taking the right actions and, together with governors, have a clear oversight of the school's progress towards offering a good quality of education. Leaders acted swiftly to introduce several improvements, including to the provision for pupils at an early stage of reading. Now pupils are back in school, work is underway to implement the further improvements required to the wider curriculum.

Strong relationships between staff and pupils support pupils' learning effectively. Teachers create a safe and warm atmosphere in which pupils work enthusiastically. They behave well and value the rewards system. Pupils and parents told me that they are happy to be back and that they particularly value the work that you and your leadership team have done to support them over recent months.

You and other senior leaders have taken effective action to improve teaching and learning by challenging underperformance and arranging appropriate staff training. Staff morale is high. They appreciate how leaders value their workload and well-being.

You have rightly prioritised improvements to the teaching of reading across the school. Staff training and additional resources have improved both the teaching of phonics and the support for pupils who are at an early stage of reading. Better systems are in place to support pupils who may have fallen behind and those who speak English as an additional language. The Year 3 pupils I heard read did so with confidence and fluency. They were happy to explain how they use their phonic knowledge to sound out words. They feel that their reading has improved and are proud about this. You and other leaders have high aspirations to raise standards of reading still further. You know that the programme of improvements is ongoing and needs to embed. You have plans to make better use of assessment to inform the teaching of reading across the school.

Leaders and teachers are knowledgeable about the requirements of pupils with SEND. Since the last inspection, staff have improved their understanding of pupils' needs through training, which is helping them support pupils more effectively. There is now a more consistent approach in how teaching assistants work with pupils in class. Some of the school's policies and information for parents are out of date. This is the required information that needs to be published about provision for pupils with SEND. Governors and leaders are aware and have plans to rectify this as soon as possible.

The findings of the previous section 5 inspection identified weaknesses in how well teachers plan learning that builds pupils' knowledge over time. You acted swiftly to address this and curriculum planning for most subjects has improved. For example, in science, teachers now have important information about the knowledge they are going to teach, alongside details of pupils' prior achievement. Working together in the school's 'learning hubs', they use this information to help them plan well-sequenced learning that meets pupils' needs better.

Your plans to improve provision in Spanish, music and computing have been slowed down by the impact of the pandemic and the period when schools were only open to some children due to COVID-19 restrictions. You and other leaders have now begun to address provision in these subjects. For example, teachers are currently working with staff from a secondary school in the Aspire Community Trust to reintroduce Spanish lessons later this term. Initially, this will offer Year 6 pupils a blend of online and face-to-face learning in Spanish to help prepare them for the secondary curriculum. Although this work has started, it is recent. Leaders and governors know that more time is needed to develop an effective curriculum for these three subjects, building on their successful work in other subjects.

You, leaders and governors have worked hard to provide better resources at the school. You are overseeing an extensive refurbishment of the buildings, including improvements to site security, better facilities for pupils with SEND and a new school library.

Additional support

Governors have worked with a national leader of governance to review the structure of the governing body. This is helping them to offer an increased level of challenge and support to senior leaders.

Senior leaders and governors have worked closely and constructively with the leaders from the Aspire Community Trust and with school improvement officers from the local authority. Working together, both organisations have facilitated access to training and support. This has helped to improve leadership and support teachers with improving their subject knowledge. Leaders are better equipped to ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently broad and planned coherently.

Leaders work in partnership with local networks of schools and with universities to source suitable staff training in reading, writing and mathematics. This has led to improvements in these core subjects. The trust has shared expertise from staff at other schools and is committed to continue to support the school as it enriches and extends the school's wider curriculum provision.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, staff, members of the governing body, and representatives from the local authority and Aspire Community Trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's improvement plans and various school policies were evaluated.

I reviewed examples of teachers' planning and some examples of the pupils' work. I spoke with a small group of pupils and considered the views represented in response to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 10 free-text responses, and 28 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chair of the trustees of the Aspire Community Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Newberry
Her Majesty's Inspector