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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 June 2021

Helen Roderick
Headteacher
Hillbourne Primary School
Kitchener Crescent
Poole
Dorset
BH17 7HX

Dear Ms Roderick

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hillbourne Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 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:

- ensure that all subject leaders check how well pupils are learning the planned curriculum.

Context

Since the previous section 5 inspection, there is a new early years leader. In September 2020, a new phonics leader was appointed. Several governors have joined the school, including a new chair and vice-chair.

Leaders' actions to develop an effective curriculum have continued during the national pandemic. However, you acknowledge that some efforts have stalled due to the impact of COVID-19.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have remained determined to improve the school. Your school improvement plan prioritises the development of reading and the wider curriculum. However, due to the restrictions of COVID-19, some subject leaders have not checked on how well pupils are learning what they need to know.

You and other leaders have rightly focused on constructing a more ambitious curriculum. Leaders have put together plans which identify the important knowledge and skills they expect pupils to learn and remember. This is making a noticeable difference in history. For example, older pupils talk confidently about the concept of invasion. Nevertheless, work is at an early stage in other subjects, such as art and design and computing.

Leaders are doing much work to develop a positive reading culture. Staff understand the importance of pupils reading high-quality texts. There are daily opportunities for pupils to read in lessons and for pleasure. Pupils say how reading is helping them to learn new words and improve their writing.

More recently, leaders have restructured how phonics is taught. The phonics leader has provided training to help staff become more effective teachers of early reading. The books pupils read are well matched to the sounds they are learning. There are early signs that leaders' actions are beginning to make a positive difference to how well pupils learn to read. However, it will take more time for these improvements to show their full impact.

The school's special educational needs and disabilities coordinator knows the needs of pupils well. She is supporting staff in becoming more skilled in adapting the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders and staff have made a concerted effort to make sure that pupils who struggle with reading and writing receive extra support.

The chair and vice-chair of governors meet with you regularly to discuss the school's improvement priorities. These meetings are helping to increase their knowledge of the quality of education pupils receive. For example, governors ask

challenging questions of leaders about early reading and the support for pupils with SEND.

Additional support

The local authority has organised training and support for governors. This is helping them to understand their responsibilities, such as for safeguarding.

You are working with an adviser to strengthen and refine the curriculum. Additionally, you are planning to undertake work with local schools to share curriculum expertise.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, senior leaders, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons, met with a group of pupils and listened to pupils read to an adult. I looked at pupils' work and reviewed other documentation provided by the school. I considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and to the staff questionnaire.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Dale Burr
Her Majesty's Inspector