

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



16 June 2021

Penny Howell
Chiltern Primary School
Chiltern Way
Duston
Northampton
Northamptonshire
NN5 6BW

Dear Mrs Howell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chiltern Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 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:

- urgently improve curriculum plans so that subject knowledge is clearly identified and sequenced in all subjects.

Context

Since the school's most recent section 5 inspection, a number of staff have left the school. A new assistant headteacher and special educational needs coordinator have been appointed. There is a new chair and vice-chair of the governing body. A number of other governors are new to role.

Main findings

Leaders are gradually improving the school's curriculum. In some subjects, leaders have set out what they want pupils to learn. In subjects where plans are further ahead, such as in history, leaders have set out the sequence of learning in each year group. However, leaders agree that the knowledge that they expect pupils to learn is not set out clearly enough in all subjects. For example, plans for modern foreign languages, music, geography, science and physical education are at the early stages of development.

Where curriculum plans are unclear, teachers do not plan activities that build pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, pupils write diaries about life in the time of Samuel Pepys, without sufficient grasp of the historical facts. Pupils learning about the planets remembered making rockets, rather than knowledge of the solar system.

Leaders' improvement plans focus on reading, the curriculum and pupils' personal development. While these plans are under way, there is still much to do to improve pupils' learning across the curriculum.

Senior leaders are making sure that subject leaders develop the knowledge to bring improvements across the curriculum. Some subject leaders are using research to inform their plans and developing links with networks of schools. For example, the leaders for reading and phonics use evidence to inform their plans. Leaders have ensured that phonics is a priority. Pupils who need additional support receive extra sessions in phonics to help them read. Leaders make sure that the books pupils read match their phonic knowledge. Pupils enjoy reading, and adults provide appropriate support. Pupils apply their phonic knowledge when reading unfamiliar words.

Leaders are determined that all pupils will achieve and succeed. Teachers adapt the curriculum to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to access the same lesson content as others. This is more effective when curriculum content sets out clearly the knowledge and skills which pupils are learning.

Governors hold leaders to account, for example, about the impact of leaders' actions. They understand the importance of providing support as well as challenge to leaders. Governors' questions to leaders reflect their sense of urgency that the school improves. Governors fulfil their statutory duties for safeguarding.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They say that their children are happy at the school. A typical parental comment was, 'Teachers are willing to listen and support parents where needed.' Parents are particularly positive about the support provided for families during the pandemic.

Additional support

Representatives of the local authority provide access to local networks of schools. Leaders use this support to further extend their knowledge and understanding of how to improve their school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other senior and curriculum leaders, pupils, staff, the chair of governors and representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I visited lessons and observed pupils reading to staff. I reviewed responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 19 free-text responses, and 30 staff questionnaires. I reviewed the school's plans for improvement, minutes of governors' meetings and reports from the local authority. I scrutinised the single central register or pre-employment checks.

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

Yours sincerely

Damien Turrell
Her Majesty's Inspector