

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Jeni Harrison
Hexthorpe Primary School
Urban Road
Hexthorpe
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN4 0HH

Dear Mrs Harrison

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hexthorpe Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 June 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.

Context

Since the last inspection in January 2020, the previous principal has left the school. You have been appointed to the role of interim principal. Two new assistant principals have joined the school. There is a new mathematics leader. There is a

new chair of the transition management board (the body responsible for local governance).

Main findings

Since your appointment, you have taken swift action to improve the quality of education. You have focused your actions on the right priorities. You know that the curriculum needs improving. All leaders are completing tasks that help with this aim. Staff understand what is expected of them and are on board with what needs to be done.

All subjects now have curriculum plans that match the expectations of the national curriculum. Through the school's curriculum, you want pupils to have experiences that will raise their aspirations of what they can achieve. You recognise that subject plans did not previously define the knowledge pupils needed to learn. You have started to address this. You are adding more detail to curriculum plans about what pupils will learn and at what point.

You have identified that some curriculum plans are better developed than others. For example, in science, it is clear what pupils will learn and when. Teachers build on the knowledge that pupils have learned in the past. Leaders have linked scientific themes together so that pupils revisit what they have been taught previously. This means that pupils are starting to remember more. Other subjects do not have plans which are as knowledge-based. You recognise that this needs to change. You know how and when you will improve plans in other subjects.

Teachers are starting to understand how to check what pupils know and can do. Leaders know that teachers can only assess pupils effectively on what they have learned. Leaders have written guidance for teachers on how to assess pupils. Subject leaders have also trained teachers on how to use quick questions to see how much pupils have remembered. Teachers use these methods to understand what pupils have remembered. Teachers adapt what they teach in response to this. These methods of assessment are stronger in subjects with more developed curriculum plans.

Teachers make sure that they revisit learning that pupils have done in the past. For example, in mathematics, pupils practise counting on in twos before learning how to solve problems where they need to divide by two. These methods of revisiting mean that pupils are more successful in gaining new knowledge. Again, teachers do this best in subjects where curriculum plans are most developed.

Pupils did not get off to a strong start in reading in the past. Phonics lessons were not well taught. Pupils were falling behind where they needed to be. Their catch-up sessions were not helping them. You have made sure that all staff are now trained in your phonics programme. Teachers are clear about which sounds pupils will learn

and in what order. Pupils are assessed accurately. If pupils fall behind, they receive one-to-one support. This means that more of them are now catching up.

You want pupils to enjoy the books that they read. Pupils have helped to reorganise the school's library. You have made sure that classrooms have books for pupils to enjoy. Teachers now teach pupils how to improve their fluency. Some pupils talked about how much they enjoy reading their books. However, too many older pupils still need support with reading as they have not kept up in the past. Leaders know that the reading curriculum for pupils in key stage 2 is not precise enough to ensure that pupils catch up and keep up. They have plans to address this

The transition management board know the priorities for the school. They visit often. They ask leaders about the quality of education in the school. Members of the board then check that leaders are carrying out the actions that they said that they would. They challenge you to make sure that this is happening. These actions have increased the pace of improvement.

Additional support

Leaders from the multi-academy trust are using their expertise to support you. They have spent time with you on improving the curriculum plans. They have helped subject leaders make links with leaders in other schools. This has aided these subject leaders in designing their curriculum plans.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the interim principal and other senior leaders, members of the transition management board and directors of the multi-academy trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I also met with subject leaders for reading, mathematics, science, and art and design to discuss their curriculum plans. I visited two mathematics lessons. I talked with pupils about their learning and listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.

I also considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 57 free-text responses, and 44 staff questionnaires.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Astrea multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Doncaster. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Knox
Her Majesty's Inspector