

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



9 July 2021

Rebecca James
Forestdale Primary School
Wareham Road
Frankley
Birmingham
West Midlands
B45 0JS

Dear Mrs James

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Forestdale Primary School

Following my visit with Jonathan Keay, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 16 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.

The school should take further action to:

- identify detailed curriculum content that will provide pupils with the knowledge that will allow them to answer more subject-specific questions
- make sure that all pupils make the best possible start with phonics by providing strong support for the reading lead
- refine curriculum plans and provide subject expertise to support subject leaders.

Context

The school's leadership and staff remain largely unchanged since the last section 5 inspection.

The school has reopened for all pupils. At the time of the inspection the Nursery and Reception classes were self-isolating. These children are being provided with remote education. Attendance is well monitored and returning to pre-COVID-19 levels.

The school has resumed its curriculum, after assessing pupils' needs.

Main findings

Despite the challenges of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders are addressing the concerns raised in the last section 5 inspection about the quality of teaching. This has, in part, been by ensuring that improvement plans focus on curriculum development. Leaders have devised a new curriculum in foundation subjects with an emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary. These plans are advanced in some subjects, such as science and geography. However, in other subjects further refinement of curriculum plans is still needed. Currently, these plans do not identify in enough detail what pupils need to learn in each topic. Subject leaders require the support of specialists with subject expertise to help with this work.

There has been an increased emphasis on helping pupils to remember what they are taught. This could be developed further. Teachers' identification of the most crucial knowledge for pupils to learn is inconsistent. Careful identification of this important knowledge will ensure that pupils remember the knowledge they need for the next stage of their learning. In some subjects, pupils are rarely set work which requires them to draw on more detailed content knowledge. Pupils are not expected to answer subject-specific questions and engage in activities which require more developed responses.

Staff have made great progress with teaching phonics over the last few years. Leaders have used external advisers to support this work. Staff continued to teach phonics remotely throughout the previous lockdown. The reading lead has ensured that all staff are trained well and use the same approach effectively. Staff identify

the weakest readers, and action is taken to help them catch up and keep up. Phonics teaching is generally effective. The reading leader has ensured that pupils only read books which have words that children can read using their phonics skills. However, pupils are encouraged to try and read words as wholes, without breaking them down. This is leading to pupils guessing words instead of using the phonics skills they have been taught. This can hinder pupils' progress. Leaders should provide training to address this issue so that all pupils make progress in reading.

The staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive of the school leadership and agreed that pupils are safe and well behaved. Staff are particularly appreciative of the training and support they have received to improve their teaching.

Senior leaders have prioritised nurturing subject leaders and identifying potential future leaders. As a result, many aspects of subject leadership in the school are strong.

Governors have ensured they have the training they need to support and challenge the school as it improves. They have made significant efforts to provide support to the school through the COVID-19 pandemic. Governors continued to meet remotely throughout the lockdown. They know the school very well and have the capacity to support the headteacher on the next stage of improvement.

Additional support

The local authority is aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provides school improvement support. School leaders are keen to have support which is most relevant to their context. The local authority is well placed to help the school identify the subject-specific expertise required for further curriculum development.

An external consultant is providing leadership support for subject leaders. Staff are positive about the benefits of this support. However, senior leaders do need to ensure that subject leaders also receive more subject-specific support for their own subject knowledge and curriculum planning.

Evidence

During the inspection, we held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, a representative of the local authority, pupils from a range of year groups, and representatives of those responsible for governance to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

Inspectors met with pupils and undertook a scrutiny of work from a range of subjects. We heard several pupils read and talked to older pupils about the books that they read for pleasure. We reviewed the school's single central record and discussed systems for managing safeguarding with the school's designated

safeguarding lead. We took account of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including four free-text responses, and 14 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 Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Fearn
Her Majesty's Inspector