

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



28 September 2021

Sally Baker
Headteacher
Cape Primary School
Cape Hill
Smethwick
West Midlands
B66 4SH

Dear Miss Baker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cape Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 September 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 ongoing 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:

- work with families to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

Context

There have been very few staffing changes since the previous section 5 inspection. A lead practitioner teacher employed from within the school started in September 2020. An upper key stage 2 phase leader started in September 2021.

A new chair of governors was elected in September 2020. A new governor joined the governing body in December 2020.

Numbers of pupils joining the school in the early years has reduced. You have decided to change the number of classes in the Reception Year from three to two for the 2021/2022 academic year.

Main findings

You are taking the necessary steps to improve the school. You ensure that leaders work together as a team and that they focus on the right priorities. Leaders continue to concentrate on the areas for improvement identified at the previous section 5 inspection. They also understand the need to develop the quality of the curriculum in foundation subjects.

Leaders have not had an accurate view of the quality of education in the school in the past. Leaders now know the school's strengths and weaknesses better, as a result of your reflective approach and support from the local authority. You now schedule time for leaders to work together to evaluate the impact of their actions as part of your improvements. For example, leaders spend time each week – on 'monitoring Mondays' – talking to staff and pupils, visiting lessons and scrutinising pupils' work. Leaders discuss their findings as a team. These findings help leaders to understand the difference that their improvement work is making. They use this information to inform the school action plan. This means the plan is suitably specific about the steps needed to move the school forward.

Governors now receive helpful information from leaders about the quality of education in the school. In addition, they make regular visits to school, remotely when necessary, to find out more about the impact of leaders' work. Individual governors focus sharply on specific areas of responsibility and report back to the governing board. This approach provides governors with a more accurate view of the school. Consequently, they are better at holding leaders to account.

You have worked hard to develop the effectiveness of middle leaders. Many have benefited from training led by a senior member of staff. In addition, some have had the opportunity to work with a school improvement adviser. This work has helped middle leaders grow in confidence. In addition, they now have a deeper understanding of how to plan a well-sequenced curriculum.

Curriculum leaders are rightly focused on improving the quality of the curriculum in foundation subjects. In most subjects, leaders have thought carefully about the essential knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. For instance, the subject leader for history has ensured that planning includes key historical concepts, such as 'cause and consequence'. Pupils get lots of opportunities to develop their knowledge of this concept through different history topics. This approach is helping pupils to remember the important information that they need to become better historians. However, there is still more work to do to improve the quality of education in foundation subjects. Although curriculum plans, in most subjects, set out the vocabulary and knowledge that pupils need to know, sometimes end points are not precise. Consequently, teachers are not always able to accurately check what pupils know and remember. Leaders are aware of this and intend to continue improving the quality of curriculum plans.

At the last section 5 inspection, you were asked to introduce clear strategies to improve outcomes in mathematics. You have remained focused on this work throughout the pandemic. The subject leader has ensured that the mathematics curriculum maps out the important content that pupils need to learn. Leaders worked with staff and showed them how to teach mathematics well. Staff now use consistent strategies to check what pupils know and are becoming better at addressing misconceptions straight away. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported to learn the curriculum. This whole-school approach is helping all pupils, including those with SEND, to keep up and become better mathematicians.

Reading has a high profile in the school. Leaders have thought carefully about how to promote a love of reading and introduced a range of strategies to do this. For example, they have set out the texts and authors that teachers will use in English lessons. This means that pupils receive a broad range of reading experiences.

The approach to teaching early reading is well organised and rigorous. Younger pupils have daily phonics lessons. They practise reading books that are well matched to their ability. Leaders have ensured that staff know how to pronounce letter sounds precisely. As a result, pupils are becoming better readers. However, you are considering making changes to the reading curriculum so that it supports pupils' development of early writing more effectively.

You have identified attendance as a cause for concern. Some pupils did not attend school as regularly as you expected during the pandemic. Leaders have procedures in place to manage attendance, but low attendance and high persistent absence have continued since 8 March 2021, when all pupils were expected to return to school. This could be a barrier to pupils making progress through the curriculum.

Additional support

Leaders have welcomed external support and use it well. Local authority support has assisted governors in strengthening their approach for holding leaders to account. Subject leaders have received support from a school improvement adviser and have developed

their subject knowledge and leadership skills. Senior leaders have worked with a national leader of education. This has improved their effectiveness in holding staff to account. In addition, staff have worked in partnership with a local mathematics hub and English hub. This range of external support is providing valuable guidance to leaders.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. I also discussed the actions taken since the last inspection with representatives of those responsible for governance and a representative of the local authority.

I reviewed a sample of curriculum plans. I heard pupils read to a familiar adult. I reviewed the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan and minutes of governors' meetings. I also examined the school's single central record of checks on staff.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Leonard
Her Majesty's Inspector