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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
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Christian Hamilton  
Headteacher  
Holywell Primary and Nursery School  
School Road  
Rubery  
Rednal  
Birmingham  
West Midlands  
B45 9EY

Dear Mr Hamilton

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection of Holywell Primary and Nursery School**

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection of your school that took place on 14 December 2022 on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous graded (section 5) inspections.

During the inspection, I discussed with you, other senior leaders, two governors and a representative of the local authority, the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also reviewed curriculum documents and met with subject leaders for reading, art, geography and religious education. I carried out lesson visits, observed pupils reading to a staff member, and spoke to pupils about their work. I also examined the school's own self-evaluation and development plan, and checked the school's single central record. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

**Holywell Primary and Nursery continues to require improvement. Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to become good.**

The school should take further action to:

- Further develop the role of subject leaders so that they can critically evaluate how well the curriculum is implemented and identify where further support and improvements are needed.
- Review assessment systems to ensure that staff have a clear understanding of how well pupils achieve across the curriculum and retain information long term.

## **Main findings**

There have been no significant changes to staffing or school context since the previous inspection.

You and your staff have been proactive in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection. You have thought judiciously about how to strengthen the quality of education and leadership and management. After careful research, you made a significant investment in reading and curriculum resources and adopted a fresh approach to teaching phonics and the structure of the curriculum. These new programmes have been implemented successfully, with staff receiving high-quality training to ensure consistency across the school. However, revisions made to the curriculum were only introduced in September, so it is too soon to evaluate their impact on pupils' achievement and subject leader development.

You have placed reading at the heart of the curriculum. Staff share your ambition for every child to be a reader. Phonics is taught consistently in each class in the early years and key stage 1. The curriculum is highly structured. The reading leader makes sure that all pupils receive high-quality input. There is already early evidence to show that every child in the Reception year has successfully learned the sounds and letters covered this term. This shows that the programme has got off to a highly positive start. You have also sharpened the support for lower attaining readers in other year groups to help them catch up quickly. For example, you have directed and made good use of the government's tutor funding to provide daily reading support for pupils in Year 1. Books now fully match the letters and sounds pupils learn. Pupils take home books that they can phonically decode to reinforce what they learn in school.

You have adopted a new approach to how most curriculum subjects are taught. Subject leaders have dedicated time each half term to monitor their respective subjects. You have established a system of reporting to hold these leaders to account. Subject leaders talk to pupils and check pupils' work to assess how well they recall and understand what they have learned. However, not all leaders have checked on the consistency and quality of curriculum delivery this term. Also, some subject leaders lack the training and experience to be critically evaluative in the reports they produce. As a result, these leaders do not pinpoint precisely where greater improvements could be made.

Staff use a combination of formative and summative methods to check how well pupils understand their learning. Quizzes are used at the end of units taught to see what pupils

can remember. However, some subjects are taught in two-week blocks rather than across the year. This can mean that pupils do not revisit some subjects for a substantial period of time. Staff are unclear how well pupils recall information in the long term or the impact of long breaks on their subject knowledge. Additionally, in some subjects, there is a lack of information about the achievement of individual pupils and those with differing abilities. This limits leaders' ability to track the progress of all pupils in all subjects.

Governors are dedicated and determined to improve the quality of education for all pupils. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Governors utilise their own professional skills well to provide a good balance of challenge and support for staff and leaders. Through school visits and information shared, governors have a detailed awareness of the actions taken to improve reading and strengthen the curriculum.

You and your staff appreciate the support provided by the local authority and Department for Education's 'Trust and School Improvement Offer'. This support has helped develop your strategic skills and aid leaders' subject leadership expertise. Reading leaders have also welcomed specialist help from the English Hub and phonics consultant to ensure that the early reading programme has been implemented consistently and effectively. This has boosted staff confidence and reassured them that the systems in place are robust and sustainable.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson  
**His Majesty's Inspector**