

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 September 2021

Elaine Williams
Pennyhill Primary School
Hollyhedge Road
West Bromwich
West Midlands
B71 3BU

Dear Miss Williams

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Pennyhill Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 July 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 three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school 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:

- build on the work already started to review and develop the curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics, so that pupils' knowledge, skills and vocabulary build over time.

Context

This is the second on-site monitoring inspection visit since the school was judged to require improvement. The school received an additional monitoring inspection in February 2021.

Leaders report that the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed the progress of some of their improvement plans. However, they are already getting plans back on track.

There have been some changes in governance since the last on-site monitoring inspection. One governor has left, and three new governors have joined the governing body.

Main findings

Leaders know the school's strengths and the areas that require further improvement. Their accurate view enables them to focus on the right things, at the right time. Leaders have directed their efforts on developing the curriculum to improve the quality of education for all pupils. They are planning improvements in a measured and proportionate manner. Leaders are supporting staff to understand the curriculum changes, so that staff can implement them well over time. Leaders have clearly thought out how they can improve the school as quickly as possible, while at the same time considering the well-being of staff.

The English and mathematics curriculums are well established. However, leaders are aware that there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills due to school closures that have disrupted curriculum delivery. Teachers are identifying and filling these gaps quickly because they know the effect that they will have on future learning if not addressed.

Pupils say they enjoy mathematics. They understand how what they learn in one lesson builds on what they learned in earlier lessons. There are lots of opportunities to develop pupils' reasoning skills throughout the week and this is evident in pupils' books. Pupils explain how they use reasoning in lessons and can provide examples of this. They say, 'Reasoning is when you have to explain and prove things in maths'. Work in English books shows that the vast majority of pupils take a pride in their work. Teachers expect pupils to produce neat work and pupils usually rise to this expectation. In most instances, any errors linked to spelling and punctuation in pupils' work are picked up by staff.

Leaders have given early reading a high priority. The school has a well-organised daily phonics programme in place. Staff make regular checks on pupils' phonic knowledge and organise extra help for pupils when required. In most cases, books are well matched to pupils' phonic ability. There is scope to further develop a love of reading, especially with younger pupils. As pupils get older, the teaching of reading is integrated into English lessons. At the start of the week, teachers focus on

developing pupils' vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. As the week progresses, this then leads into a focus on writing. This sequence of learning is evident in pupils' books and is having a positive impact on developing pupils' reading and writing.

Leaders have been developing the curriculum in other subjects, including science, art and design, history and geography. Curriculum plans in these subjects identify previous learning and future learning, which places current learning into context. The plans clearly map out the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that need to be taught over time. Teachers are clear about what to teach and when to teach it. Some of these plans are in the early stages of being implemented. Hence, it is too early to evaluate their impact on what pupils know and can remember. Leaders plan to monitor the effectiveness of the changes they have made to the curriculum. If needs be, they are prepared to make further adaptations to ensure the best outcomes for pupils.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the leadership in the school and say they enjoy working at Pennyhill. Staff comment that leaders are considerate of their well-being and that workload is manageable.

On the whole, parents are positive about the school. In particular, they value the support that staff give to their children, which helps them to do well in school. However, there are some areas that parents are less positive about, such as levels of communication between school and home.

During the pandemic, governors focused their efforts on supporting the well-being of pupils, staff and leaders. This continues to be a priority for them. School leaders provide governors with relevant information about curriculum developments. As a result, governors are knowledgeable about the improvements that are taking place in school. They question and challenge school leaders appropriately and ask about the impact that any improvements are having on pupils' outcomes. Governors recognise that they have not physically been in school as often as they would like, due to COVID-19 related restrictions.

The school's improvement plan has been written in response to the partial closure of schools. There is a clear focus on pupils' physical and emotional well-being. In addition, leaders have continued to work on developing the curriculum. English and mathematics continue to be monitored and refined. Subjects other than English and mathematics have also been developed over the course of the year.

Additional support

The local authority's school improvement adviser has regular involvement with the school. He visits the school on a termly basis to look at leadership and the quality of education. The improvement adviser also provides bespoke support for the school,

including working with subject leaders to look closely at the work that pupils complete in their books. School leaders value this support.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders and two representatives of the governing body. I also met with a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I examined the school's single central record of background checks that leaders make on staff's suitability to work with children prior to employment. I reviewed the school's improvement plan and minutes of governing body meetings. I met with two separate groups of pupils to talk about the quality of education in different subjects. I looked at curriculum plans alongside pupils' books.

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

Wayne Simner
Her Majesty's Inspector