

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



5 July 2021

Caroline Burden
Headteacher
Castleford Townville Infants' School
Poplar Avenue
Townville
Castleford
West Yorkshire
WF10 3QJ

Dear Mrs Burden

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Castleford Townville Infants' School

Following my visit to your school on 26 May 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:

- monitor the delivery of your chosen phonics programme to ensure that this is followed carefully, consistently and with expertise, by all staff
- support and challenge staff to demonstrate clearly the impact that their actions are having on pupils' learning and progress in reading
- refine the school improvement plan so that this is sharply focused on appropriate key priorities that lead to ambitious outcomes. This will support governors in holding leaders to account so that actions are addressed swiftly and sustainably.

Context

Since the last inspection, staffing has been through a period of significant change. Five new governors have joined the governing body, including the chair of governors, who was previously chair of the school improvement committee. Your appointment as headteacher has provided stability to the school during this time.

COVID-19 has caused some disruption in school. On the day before this inspection, children in the early years and a small proportion of staff, including the headteacher, had returned to school following self-isolation due to COVID-19. This absence of key members of staff is unsettling in a small school.

Main findings

You have begun undertaking the fundamental actions necessary to improve the school. Led by your ambition, staff now have high aspirations for pupils. You understand the importance of equipping pupils with the core skills necessary to become successful learners. You acknowledge that this needs to happen consistently across all classes in order to tackle the areas of weakness identified in the previous section 5 inspection.

Your systems for the teaching of phonics and early reading are precise. However, you have not yet fully monitored the implementation of these. As a result, teachers' delivery of phonics is variable. Consistent, high-quality teaching is essential in order that pupils make up lost ground. Resources match the sounds and words that children are learning.

More widely in the English curriculum, your recently introduced writing strategy is being well monitored. Teachers follow plans carefully and staff are well trained. This is supporting pupils to make accelerated progress.

Attendance was identified as an area to improve at the last inspection. You have put in place tight systems to track and respond to any absences. You regularly reward good attendance, for instance, through your end of year attendance raffle. Communications continue to stress the importance of good attendance. A recent

effort to target those pupils with weaker attendance has brought marked improvements. As a result, the number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced.

Parents are supportive of the school. They valued the additional support over the period when many children were educated from home. They say that the school 'rose to the challenges of COVID-19 closures'. Parents feel that their children are happy and safe. The majority believe that the school has high expectations for children. Leaders and governors are proud of the strong support the school receives from its community.

An external review of governance has been undertaken. This has resulted in some improvements. For instance, the chair of governors says that the quality of meetings has improved and that governors have greater clarity on leaders' work. However, the minutes of governors' meetings show that governors still do not commonly challenge leaders' assertions.

Governors are frustrated that COVID-19 has delayed some of their planned monitoring activities. During this time, their opportunity to visit school has been limited. Governors know that this activity must continue apace to sharpen their in-depth knowledge of the school's work.

At present, action planning is broad. School development plans lack the specific detail required for leaders to measure their progress effectively. As a result, it is not possible for governors to hold leaders to account effectively.

Additional support

Leaders have been proactive in seeking external support. They have used these partnerships, along with the wealth of knowledge from the headteacher, to help them begin to make the necessary improvements to English and mathematics.

The local authority has provided ongoing support since the last inspection. The link adviser has visited the school frequently and has been supported by a number of subject consultants. The school has made good use of external support from English and mathematics hubs. This has been particularly focused on developing the skills of middle leaders. This is helping to improve the quality of education in the core subjects of English and mathematics.

Governors have recently attended training on special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. This is helping new governors to better understand their role.

Evidence

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

I checked the school's single central register, visited classes with the headteacher and visited phonics sessions. I looked at pupils' work for English and the wider curriculum. I also looked at the minutes of governing body meetings and at attendance information. I considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for staff and parents.

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

Yours sincerely

Marcus Newby
Her Majesty's Inspector