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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Amanda Bartholomew
Headteacher
Anston Park Junior School
Park Avenue
North Anston
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S25 2QZ

Dear Mrs Bartholomew

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Anston Park Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 17 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 three 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:

- ensure that plans for a new phonics programme are effectively implemented
- check how well new curriculum plans are helping pupils to develop knowledge and skills in their subjects.

Context

There have been no significant staffing changes, or changes in governance, since the last monitoring inspection.

School leaders and teachers have continued to improve the phonics programme and the wider curriculum. The impact of COVID-19 has slowed down some of the planned improvements.

Main findings

The areas for improvement from the previous inspection are being addressed. The school improvement plan identifies the right priorities. You and your team have made progress in improving reading, the wider curriculum and the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Some of the planned actions to check the impact of the wider curriculum, and to introduce a new reading scheme, have been interrupted by COVID-19.

Since the previous inspection, you have put in place support to help the weakest readers. You identify these pupils quickly and you have trained all staff to deliver a phonics programme. Adults' knowledge and expertise in teaching early reading and phonics have improved. You plan to strengthen these further with a new phonics scheme and a wider range of books from September 2021.

All pupils are spending more time reading. They told me that they enjoy reading and they like the range of books that are available to them. There is evidence that the variety of regular reading activities is broadening the range of literature that pupils read. Reading is used as an opportunity to learn about other subjects. Some pupils read with fluency and understanding. This helps them to learn about subjects such as history and science.

You are taking action to improve the quality of the school's wider curriculum. Subject leaders have planned and put in place a curriculum that is broad and ambitious. Subject leaders now need to consider how to check that pupils know more and remember more of what they have learned.

Teachers have identified key vocabulary and knowledge that they want pupils to learn. For example, the curriculum in art and design is improving pupils' knowledge of art styles and great artists, as well as their artistic technique. In Ofsted's survey, one parent commented, 'the curriculum is broad and provides my child with a variety of interesting subjects and topics'.

You have made improvements to the procedures for identifying, helping and managing pupils with SEND. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has ensured that pupils in need of additional support receive it. Teachers and teaching assistants have a well-organised programme of training, which is helping them to

support pupils with SEND. Teachers carefully consider pupils' support plans when planning their teaching. I saw examples of the impact of this work when I visited lessons.

Mathematics lessons have a clear structure. You have carefully considered what number facts and methods pupils need in order to be successful in mathematics. Teachers make sure that pupils are secure in their calculation methods. They teach a range of strategies that allow pupils to combine facts and methods to help solve problems. This means that pupils have the understanding needed before moving on to more-challenging mathematical procedures.

Staff are very positive about working at the school. They feel respected and supported to do their job effectively. Staff feel that workload is well managed. Training for staff is appropriately focused on the school development priorities. As you adopt a new reading scheme, you know that refresher training on early reading is necessary.

Governors know the school and the community very well. They are effective in their monitoring of the school. Governors have a strategy group which works with the local authority and the headteacher to support school improvement.

Additional support

Your staff are working with external partners to develop the curriculum. Teachers have developed their subject knowledge through networks in the local authority. Additional independent support and scrutiny comes from the local authority. This range of support is bringing about improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher. I also met a number of subject leaders and the SENCo. We discussed the actions taken to improve the school since the last inspection. I undertook lesson visits in reading, phonics and mathematics. I met a group of pupils to discuss behaviour and learning. I held discussions with members of the governing body. I looked at curriculum plans, some pupils' work and the school improvement plan.

I considered 48 responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

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

Yours sincerely

Carl Sugden
Ofsted Inspector