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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Claire Temple
Headteacher
Sandbrook Primary School
Stavordale Road
Moreton
Wirral
Merseyside
CH46 9PS

Dear Ms Temple

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sandbrook Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 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 four 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:

- build on the effective work done so far in the design of the curriculum to build pupils' knowledge of how each subject works

- ensure that the books pupils read match the sounds that they have learned so that pupils have more opportunities to practise and reinforce their reading skills.

Context

Since the previous inspection, two teachers have left the school. Two teachers joined the staff in September 2020, meaning that half of the teaching staff were new to the school.

Two governors left the governing body in the autumn term 2020 with one new governor starting in September 2020.

Main findings

- Despite recent changes to the teaching staff, and the impact of the pandemic, you and the deputy headteacher have ploughed ahead with school improvement. Together, you are taking the right steps to set higher aspirations for pupils' learning in a range of subjects. Staff and pupils alike are positive about the new approach that you are bringing to the curriculum. Your plans for developing the school further are relevant and appropriate.
- You have introduced a new phonics programme to help pupils build on their prior learning in reading. You are training staff so that this new programme can be delivered in a consistent manner. Teachers are using the phonics scheme to check on what learning has not been remembered, due to the disruption to pupils' education caused by the pandemic. When reading, pupils apply their knowledge of the sounds that they had learned well. However, the books that these pupils read are not matched well enough to the sounds that they are learning. This means that they do not have frequent enough opportunities to practise and consolidate their phonics knowledge.
- The approach to teaching mathematics has been improved. Pupils have more opportunities to revisit and build their mathematical knowledge. The new curriculum plans for mathematics are providing direction for staff so that they know what to teach and when to teach it. As such, teachers are helping pupils to recap on any learning in number and calculation that has been forgotten during the time when many pupils were not in school. While this is helping pupils to catch up with some aspects of mathematics, pupils have not had the chance to develop their understanding of topics, such as measures and geometry. This is due to the impact of the pandemic. Teachers are beginning to help pupils to get back on track with the planned curriculum.
- In other subjects, you are developing the curriculum in two distinctly different ways. For some subjects such as Latin and physical education (PE) you have opted to buy in ready-made schemes of work to help staff to structure the

curriculum so that it builds pupils' knowledge in a logical order. In other subjects, such as science, art, geography and history, school leaders are re-designing the curriculum to identify the core knowledge that pupils need to gain. The positive impact of this work is starting to show in pupils' recall of factual knowledge. However, these plans do not make clear what it means to be a historian or scientist. This limits pupils' learning of the essential knowledge that would help them gain a broader understanding of these subjects.

- Governors are improving their practice by asking challenging questions of leaders at their meetings. Governors are also seeking out training to develop their knowledge of school improvement. For example, they have received training on personal, social, economic and health education, to better understand how the school will implement the statutory changes to the curriculum in the future.
- You have worked well to start to address the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent. Although your strategies are ongoing, you are developing your links with families to support pupils to attend school more often. There are some early signs of success. Parents and carers are responding positively to your personalised approach to help pupils' attendance improve.

Additional support

The local authority has put in place a local leader to aid the school's development. More recently, the local authority has brought together a cluster of similar schools to offer support and to share good practice. You are making best use of these initiatives to firm up your approach to the development of the curriculum and to enhance staff's expertise.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the phonics leader, pupils, representatives of those responsible for governance, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I also visited lessons for phonics, looked at a sample of pupils' science, history and geography work and evaluated the curriculum plans for all subjects. I reviewed the minutes of governing body meetings. I also took account of two responses to Parent view, Ofsted's online questionnaire and seven responses to the staff survey.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector