

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Theresa Alford
Headteacher
Field Place Infant School
Nelson Road
Worthing
West Sussex
BN12 6EN

Dear Mrs Alford

Additional monitoring inspection of Field Place Infant School

Following my inspection with Maxine McDonald-Taylor, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) and Shaun Jarvis, HMI to your school on 4 and 5 March 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the 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 provide education to all pupils during the current circumstances.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 (2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for visiting schools while routine inspections remain temporarily suspended. It was additional to the usual monitoring process for schools that are judged to require improvement.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, most of Ofsted's monitoring inspections are being carried out remotely. This inspection, however, moved to an on-site visit due to significant concerns about safeguarding.

The inspection took place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections. The school was last inspected in October 2017.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 on the school, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- take account of differences in pupils' learning during the lockdown when constructing a broad and balanced curriculum in the foundation subjects
- strengthen procedures for recording safeguarding and behaviour concerns.

Context

- Since the previous inspection a new key stage 1 leader, a new teacher-in-charge of the specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and a new literacy lead have been appointed. There have been several changes to the governing body in the same period.
- About one in ten pupils were educated remotely during the autumn term 2020. No single class or year group was disproportionately affected.
- At the time of the inspection, just under two thirds of pupils were being educated remotely. Three quarters of vulnerable pupils and a third of pupils with SEND were attending on site.

Main findings

- Leaders had got on well with securing improvements in the school prior to the start of the pandemic. Changes to the curriculum ensured that teaching took greater account of the school's context and of pupils' needs. For example, teaching in Reception was adapted so that children were making a quicker start in learning phonics.
- Senior leaders had also made a positive start in developing subject leaders' roles prior to March 2020. Well-focused training ensured that subject leaders were increasingly knowledgeable about their responsibilities. The pandemic has delayed plans to secure further improvements in subject leadership and the curriculum. Leaders are keen to get back on track with developments as soon as possible.
- Leaders have focused on the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics during the pandemic. Activities in other subjects, such as history and science, have been optional during the lockdown and have not always followed the school's usual curriculum. Leaders acknowledge that pupils' learning in these subjects is likely to have varied widely during the lockdown as a result. However, leaders have not considered how they will address gaps in pupils' learning across the wider curriculum precisely enough. Leaders are unsure how or when they will fully re-establish the school's usual broad and balanced curriculum.

- Leaders have considered the needs of vulnerable pupils during the pandemic carefully, particularly for those pupils with SEND. Good quality activities and resources support pupils' needs well. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND continue to benefit from the help and support that they usually receive, whether learning at home or in school.
- Reading has a high priority and the school has focused on the teaching of phonics during the current lockdown. Pupils at home complete phonics activities and practise early reading skills by accessing books linked to the school's phonics scheme. Pupils in school complete similar reading activities to those learning at home, but also benefit from reading to an adult every day. A specialist reading teacher, who successfully supported pupils who had fallen behind with their reading during the first lockdown, continues to support those who need extra help.
- Governors have developed their roles in challenging school leaders since the previous inspection. They are holding leaders to account more effectively as a result. For example, in recent months governors have discussed the school's rationale for focusing on reading, writing and mathematics during the lockdown. Governors, like school leaders, are keen to return to the school's usual broad curriculum as quickly as possible when pupils return to school.
- Leaders have worked with a number of external partners to support school improvements in phonics teaching and subject leadership since the previous inspection. The local authority has focused mainly on providing helpful support during the pandemic, including guidance in the development of remote education. The local authority intends to continue to support the school in the future.
- Although safeguarding is effective, inspectors identified that minor improvements were needed in the accuracy and maintenance of child protection and behaviour records.
- The school has established a digital record-keeping system since the previous inspection. The system has improved the school's safeguarding records, ensuring that records are maintained centrally and are easily accessed by relevant staff. Records show that the system is usually used well. However, occasionally some records, such as the minutes of safeguarding meetings, are not uploaded swiftly enough.
- Staff told inspectors that the school's behaviour policy is followed consistently throughout the school. Staff know what to do should a behaviour incident occur and feel well supported by senior leaders. Records of serious behaviour incidents are, generally, well maintained, although leaders do not always sign and date entries or record follow-up actions, as quickly as they should.

Evidence

This inspection was initially conducted remotely but moved on site due to concerns raised about safeguarding. We held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the chair and vice chair of the governing body, a group of staff and a representative of the local authority to discuss safeguarding procedures and leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils during a national lockdown.

We also discussed and reviewed samples of pupils' remote learning and work. We also checked a range of safeguarding documents. We considered staff and parent responses to Ofsted's surveys, including 40 free-text comments.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett
Her Majesty's Inspector