

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Rachael Williams
Executive Headteacher
Cheswardine Primary and Nursery School
Glebe Close
Cheswardine
Market Drayton
Shropshire
TF9 2RU

Dear Mrs Williams

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cheswardine Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 30 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 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.

Context

Since the inspection in September 2019, the school has joined another local primary school to form the Goldstone Federation. There is an executive headteacher who works across both schools.

The disruption caused by the pandemic has delayed the progress of some of the improvements that were planned. In particular, this has affected the work of subject leaders to implement improved curricula. However, these plans are now back on track.

One new teacher has joined the school in January 2021. The executive headteacher is currently the special educational needs coordinator and is providing bespoke support to a teacher at the school who will take up this post from September 2021.

Main findings

The executive headteacher and governors know the school's strengths and what needs to get better. Their development plans are matched well to the areas for improvement. Subject leaders have benefited from a training programme that has improved their knowledge of how to plan an effective curriculum. The training has also helped them know what they need to do to check on the quality of education in each of their subjects.

The executive headteacher acted quickly to identify the right training for these leaders. However, it has taken longer than expected to complete the training programme because of interruptions caused by the pandemic. As a result, in most subjects leaders have not started to make checks on how well their plans are being put into place across the school. A robust monitoring plan has been produced for the start of the autumn term 2021. It sets out clearly how each subject leader will be given the time they need to find out what is happening in their subject.

Leaders and governors are determined that pupils at Cheswardine will experience an ambitious and well-planned curriculum. New curriculum plans in many subjects include details about what pupils should learn and are well sequenced. Leaders have ensured that the important vocabulary pupils will need to know, understand and use in each subject is included in the plans. This is having a positive effect. For example, pupils in upper key stage 2 used subject-related vocabulary confidently and accurately when talking about what they had learned about Scandinavia in their recent geography lessons.

Leaders prioritised the teaching of writing when the school fully reopened in March 2021. This was because they identified that many pupils were at risk of falling behind and needed extra support with handwriting, spelling, punctuation and writing longer pieces. Teachers' checks on pupils' writing show that most pupils, especially in key stage 2, have made strong progress and have caught up to where

they should be. However, this has meant that teachers have had to wait to get started with some of the new curriculum plans. Pupils are now experiencing the planned curriculum in most subjects. In some subjects, leaders are not yet checking on pupils' learning to find out how well they are doing or if what is planned is matched well enough to their needs. Leaders have created firm plans for this to begin in all subjects from next term.

Since the last inspection, leaders have made significant improvements to the mathematics curriculum. These have included training to further improve teachers' subject knowledge. The curriculum is well established and sequenced so that pupils can build knowledge over time. Teachers are delivering this curriculum consistently well.

Leaders ensure that reading is a priority. Pupils in the early years and key stage 1 have phonics lessons every day. Their reading books are generally matched well to their phonics knowledge. Leaders are keen for the teaching of early reading to be as strong as possible and have planned more training for all staff in the autumn term. Older pupils' love of reading is clear. They spoke knowledgeably about the wide variety of books they have read and enjoyed. Earlier this term they took part in Shrewsbury's 'Bookfest' and the creative writing competition. They spoke excitedly about being inspired by children's author Emma Carroll.

Governors know the school well. They hold the executive headteacher to account effectively for her work to improve the school and are regularly involved in evaluating the impact of the school development plans. Governors also provide effective support. This has been particularly strong throughout the pandemic, when their knowledge and experience were utilised in all areas of the school's work.

Additional support

Leaders have worked with the local authority to secure the right support for the school. Subject leaders have received bespoke sessions to develop their curriculum knowledge and leadership skills. The school has also received support from a national leader of education to further improve teachers' subject knowledge and the mathematics curriculum.

Staff have also made good use of being in a federation with another primary school. They have been able to share good practice with colleagues who have similar roles. Subject leaders have found this particularly useful.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with the executive headteacher, a senior teacher, pupils, administration staff, a member of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection.

I spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at examples of their work. I saw pupils read to a familiar adult. I also visited a phonics lesson with the English leader. I considered five responses to the staff survey. 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 evaluated minutes of governing body meetings and leaders' plans for improvement. I also reviewed 12 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including nine 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 Shropshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Jo Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector