

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



14 June 2021

Bethany Stanley
Headteacher
Aiskew, Leeming Bar Church of England Primary School
2 Leeming Lane
Leeming Bar
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL7 9AU

Dear Mrs Stanley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Aiskew, Leeming Bar Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 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 2020-21 COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school 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:

- adapt curriculum plans to emphasise and sequence more effectively the subject knowledge and skills pupils should know and remember over time
- improve teachers' use of subject-specific vocabulary so that teaching does not reinforce or develop misconceptions in pupils' understanding.

Context

There have been no changes in staff since the previous inspection in June 2019.

Leaders report that COVID-19 has slowed the pace of school improvement, both during the period of COVID-19 restrictions and since the school has been open to all pupils. The necessary precautions introduced in school to reduce the spread of the virus, such as regular handwashing and social distancing, are reducing learning time and the range of activities available to teachers to help improve pupils' learning.

All pupils and staff have returned to school. At the time of the inspection there were no pupils or staff self-isolating due to COVID-19.

Main findings

Pupils, staff and governors are proud to be associated with the school. The parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's inspection questionnaire, were fulsome in their praise of the way staff care for and nurture their children. Many parents believe the school has improved since you arrived. Although inspection evidence demonstrates that there is still work to be done, the school is on the right track. You and your staff bristle with passion when you describe how you endeavour to help every pupil do their very best.

At the last inspection, in June 2019, leaders were asked to improve the quality of the curriculum so that subjects were planned with a clear path of progression to help deepen pupils' understanding. Since then, leaders have started to think more critically about how and when pupils learn new content. However, the small number of staff and the fact that curriculum leaders are responsible for multiple subjects have acted as a barrier to swifter and more precise curriculum changes.

Curriculum plans include increasing detail relating to how pupils learn important skills, such as how to evaluate, apply their understanding and analyse information. However, plans do not fully explore the substantive subject knowledge leaders want pupils to learn, or consider in detail how teachers will help pupils remember subject content over longer periods of time. As a result, in mathematics, pupils will occasionally choose to draw upon a range of memory and calculation aids when solving problems, rather than recalling and using the most efficient techniques and approaches from previous lessons.

The leadership and teaching of early reading has come a long way since the last section 5 inspection. Pupils in the early years and Year 1 and 2 now learn to read using one phonics programme. The books pupils read are now well matched to their phonic knowledge. Staff have received appropriate reading training. Consequently, when staff work with pupils and listen to them read, they skilfully introduce new words and sounds while sensitively supporting pupils who may need a helping hand.

Leaders have successfully increased the profile of writing across the school. They have reflected on and introduced a wider range of texts for pupils to read. This is contributing to pupils using more challenging vocabulary in their written work. The importance of accurate spelling is promoted and celebrated in all classes. Pupils receive spelling certificates frequently.

Teachers and support staff work well together. They juggle the demands of teaching mixed-age classes superbly. Pupils speak very highly of the support they receive from staff to help them do well. There are occasions when the teachers' use of subject-specific vocabulary in mathematics is not as strong as it could be. Sometimes, this can inadvertently confuse pupils or reinforce early misconceptions.

Governors are heavily involved in the life of the school and know it well. During the period of COVID-19 restrictions, governors reorganised their roles and responsibilities to ensure that they actively supported you, staff and pupils at the same time as keeping a watchful eye on the quality of education pupils were able to access remotely. Governors are mindful of the importance of staff well-being, including your own. They attempt to organise staff social events and provide random acts of kindness. The chair of the governing body is highly effective in her role. She links closely with you and understands the school's strengths and areas for improvement in detail.

Additional support

You are outward facing. You actively look for new ideas to improve the school's provision and link closely with a number of other schools locally. Leaders have been able to access funding from the Department for Education to secure support from a national leader of education (NLE). The NLE has worked closely with you to improve school improvement planning documentation, review curriculum planning, advance the effectiveness of governors and review the school's finances.

Furthermore, you work in collaboration with representatives from the local authority and diocese of Leeds. This support, coupled with your drive and determination, has helped to improve the Christian ethos of the school and respond to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, pupils, staff, representatives of those responsible for governance, a representative of the local authority, a representative of the diocese and a NLE to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Some meetings were held virtually.

I visited lessons in mathematics and met with the curriculum leader of geography. I also scrutinised curriculum documentation in English and history, school action plans and the school self-evaluation document. I listened to pupils read with support staff and reviewed the responses to the staff and parent questionnaires.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Elliott
Her Majesty's Inspector