

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



14 April 2021

Helen Johnson
Headteacher
Birkenhead Park School
Park Road South
Birkenhead
Merseyside
CH43 4UY

Dear Mrs Johnson

Additional, remote monitoring inspection of Birkenhead Park School

Following my remote inspection with John Donald, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), of your school on 18 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.

This monitoring inspection was carried out remotely. As such, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would normally be the case during an on-site inspection. As a result, this letter provides a more limited level of assurance than our usual monitoring reports.

The inspection took place because the school has received four successive judgements of requires improvement. The school's most recent section 5 inspection took place in November 2019.

Having considered all the evidence and taking into account the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) 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.

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

- ensure that staff pay greater attention to the gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge so that they are helped to read with fluency and accuracy.

Context

- Since the last inspection, two governors have left the local governing body (LGB) and three have joined. A new head of science joined the school in January 2020 and an assistant special educational needs coordinator was appointed in March 2020. An assistant headteacher was appointed in October 2020. Seven teachers have left the school and eight have joined.
- In the spring term, when the school was closed to most pupils, less than one in ten pupils were educated on site. About one in five vulnerable pupils, and less than one in ten of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), were educated on site during that time.
- Approximately nine out of ten pupils were attending school at the time of this inspection. A very small proportion of pupils from Years 7 to 10 were self-isolating and being educated remotely.
- Five members of staff were self-isolating at the time of this inspection.

Main findings

- Since November 2019, you and leaders throughout the school have worked together to strengthen curriculum plans and the systems that support pupils with SEND. Leaders have provided effective training for staff throughout this period. Teachers are better equipped to deliver the curriculum and pupils with SEND are supported more effectively than they were in the past. These crucial improvements have helped to ensure that pupils are receiving an appropriate education under the current circumstances.
- You have ensured that all pupils are accessing an appropriately broad curriculum. Subject leaders have carefully identified which parts of the curriculum have not been delivered over the last year. They are successfully reordering units of work so that pupils can cover missed content. This means that pupils' learning has not been disrupted on their return to school.
- Teachers are using a wide range of suitable assessments to establish what pupils remember from their previous learning. Teachers and pupils have a clear picture of the most important knowledge that needs revisiting. Subject leaders and teachers are using this information to make decisions about what pupils will learn in the future.
- You have identified that many pupils in Years 7 and 8 are not able to read as well as they should. Teachers have adapted the English curriculum to provide some support for these pupils to help them gain reading fluency and accuracy. However, this support does not focus on the root cause of pupils'

reading difficulties. This is because staff do not pay enough attention to the gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge when devising strategies to help pupils read.

- You have ensured that pupils in Year 7 have their own area to help them settle back into school. These pupils said that this is helping them to feel safe and secure. Pupils in Year 11 are also positive about their return to school. Teachers are helping these pupils to quickly identify what they know and remember. Leaders have ensured that pupils in Year 11 are getting appropriate careers information, advice and guidance. These pupils told us that they feel confident to make decisions about their next steps in education, employment or training.
- Leaders have improved the information that teachers get about the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders are providing training for teachers which is helping to strengthen the support for these pupils. Leaders and other staff have strengthened relationships with the families of vulnerable pupils and pupils with SEND over the last year. Staff carefully considered the actions that were necessary to support these pupils' needs when the school recently reopened to all pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils who are working remotely have the equipment and internet access that they need. Over the last year, leaders and teachers have strengthened remote education. Consequently, pupils learning remotely benefit from the same curriculum content and opportunities as those learning in school.
- Members of the LGB know the school well. They are providing high levels of support and challenge about improvements to the curriculum and the support for pupils with SEND. Throughout the pandemic, members of this group have sought appropriate assurances about the quality of education and support that pupils are receiving. Members of this group understand the multitude of issues that leaders have considered as they prepared to reopen the school to all pupils in March 2021.
- You and other senior leaders have benefited from support provided by the trust. This has strengthened leadership of the curriculum and the leadership of systems that support pupils with SEND. Support from a local school has helped subject leaders in English and mathematics to improve how the curriculum is delivered. A range of local charities have helped the school to provide pupils with the equipment they need to learn remotely.

Evidence

This inspection was conducted remotely. We held meetings with you and other senior leaders to discuss leaders' actions to provide education to all pupils under the current circumstances. We spoke with members of the LGB and a representative of

the BePART multi-academy trust. We also spoke with groups of middle leaders, teachers, and pupils.

We examined curriculum plans and records of the meetings of the LGB. We considered 74 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. We also took account of the 72 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the 43 comments received by Ofsted's free-text facility.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the BePART multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wirral. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington
Her Majesty's Inspector