

Local Authority School Improvement Partner Meeting – Spring Term 2021

Ringway Primary School

Headteacher: Lisa Robson

Chair of Governors: Kristian Marshall

School Improvement Partner: Derek Sleightholme

Date of Visit: 02 March 2021

A summary of the progress made since the autumn term and the school's successes

At the start of the autumn term:

- Leaders ensured provision met COVID safe requirements. Consequently, all pupils were able to return safely to school and join their new classes.
- During September the key focus was on ensuring pupils settled back into school and the rigour of academic and personal routines they usually enjoy.
- The Recovery Plan drawn up by leaders was implemented.
- Baseline assessment was completed during October. The findings were used to identify gaps in learning and deployment of interventions.
- Priority was given to catching up on basic skills so that pupils quickly achieve at least the standards expected for their age.
- Home learning materials were prepared for those pupils who were temporarily self-isolating.

During the autumn and spring terms:

- Three instalments of funding to support catch up learning have been used to support additional staffing.
- Staff have demonstrated notable resilience in meeting the day-to-day challenges or managing both school based and home learning.
- Governors' robust monitoring included surveys of staff opinion, scrutinising feedback from parents and holding virtual meetings. Their regular dialogue with the headteacher using Zoom has ensured they are well placed to support the school as provision is adjusted to meet needs of pupils and their parents.

How is the school managing school and remote learning?

Parents can easily access information about remote education provision through a link on the front page of the school website. The policy agreed by governors is closely aligned to national guidance issued by the DfE to all schools. The policy describes the school remote learning offer and in return what the school expects from parents. Support for pupils with special needs, those who are ill and those with limited or no access to on-line provision is communicated clearly.

Staff agreed to provide the usual planned curriculum. This is adjusted to address gaps in key skills that were identified through baseline assessments made in the autumn term. The home learning programme is matched to the content being provided at school. Typical coverage is:

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- Spelling and handwriting units
- Class novel/Building on writing skills.
- Mathematics
- Topic work
- Science

During home learning reception children access Tapestry for phonics. All pupils follow content uploaded to Class Dojo. Zoom is used regularly for live activities thus ensuring pupils based at home can reengage with each other and their teacher. Although expectations for time given to home learning, as stated in the policy, follow national guidance (3 hours each day for Key Stage 1, 4 hours each day for Key Stage 2) experience suggests this is optimistic.

Over time, parents have become more confident in the way they can help their children and pupil engagement with remote learning has improved. Governors report they have received positive verbal feedback from parents about the approach taken by staff, the resources provided and the support and guidance that has been given.

The headteacher provided the following additional information:

- Weekly packs are sent out on Class Dojo every Sunday.
- A suggested timetable is provided to support home learning; this is what is being followed in school for key worker pupils. This ensures any pupil only attending part time can see what will be done in school and what still needs to be done at home.
- Parents can request a printed pack and these can be picked up at the school office every Monday.
- Teaching Assistants are in school full time. Teachers are working on a week in week out rota. When in school they are concentrating on support for key worker pupil bubbles. When at home they are overseeing the remote learning of two year groups; they are providing Class Dojo support, responding to messages and giving feedback to any uploaded work.
- Teachers have a ten-minute Zoom meeting with their class each morning where they talk through their tasks of the day and answer any questions the pupils may have. The impact of this is that it encourages pupils into commencing home learning.
- Weekly Zoom sessions with class provide opportunities for pupils to take part in an activity with their class.
- Weekly Spanish lessons for each year group are uploaded.
- Reception and Key Stage 1 pupils can access two stories their teacher is reading each week. Key Stage 2 pupils can access the teacher reading chapters from a novel each day.
- Class Dojo points (house points) are still issued – bronze, silver, gold certificates.

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- Celebration assembly on a Friday morning – certificates awarded for ‘Star of the Bubble’ in school and ‘Home- learner Star of Week. Certificates are posted home for pupils not in school.

Have there been any changes and improvements to the remote learning developed since March 2020?

Class Dojo was already being used as a school-based learning facility when the first lockdown period was introduced. Initially it was not used to support remote learning. One of the early difficulties was that internet access in home settings was often by mobile phones and therefore subject to data transfer limitations. Consequently, paper-based work packs were initially used.

Looking back, it is clear significant progress has been made. Parents have responded positively to the introduction of on-line learning, the formalising of a timetable, regular feedback on pupils’ work completed on-line and support when difficulties occurred, or tasks needed clarification. Daily monitoring by staff has ensured the work undertaken by pupils is closely monitored. The overall impact is that pupil engagement is much improved, repetition of content is avoided and only one family is currently not engaged in on-line remote learning. Weekly contact and support is provided to this family.

Face to face discussions between pupils and their teacher using Zoom have had a strong and positive impact on pupils’ well-being. Pupils are able to keep in touch with school, their class friends and their teacher. The Friday whole school ‘Zoom assembly’ makes a positive contribution to pupils spiritual, moral and social development.

Tasks undertaken by pupils at home includes reading stories, contributing to ‘show and tell’ sessions and playing on-line educational games. Staff provide support to remote learning do so when they are working from home (rota system in place). They are able to concentrate on provision that becomes more personalised to the individual pupil in terms of resources plus advice and guidance to parents.

What feedback have you received from parents about the provision for home learning?

Parents have been surveyed twice for views on home learning. They were asked to draw to leaders’ attention their perceptions of the offer, any barriers they had experienced and what the school could do to make further improvements. Checks were made to ensure parents knew how to access support.

Parents have been really positive about remote learning especially the communication and support aspects of provision. They report the introduction of Zoom virtual contact has gone a long way towards resolving the lack of personal contact between their children and teachers.

Typical responses are:

‘Communication has been excellent, making children and parents feel connected to school. We feel the support and help is there if needed. The variety of work is keeping my child Interested and occupied as well as obviously teaching her and helping her learn. My daughter looks forward to her work coming on a Sunday to see what we have to do the coming week. I personally think school is doing an excellent job.’

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'I think under such horrible circumstances the school have been absolutely amazing. Mr Grace has been brilliant as always and only ever a message away. The office again have been fantastic as well as every other member of staff within the school.'

'Use of class dojo, regular updates and homework provision has been amazing.'

'Printing off the work for the boys thank you. Keeping in touch with me and the boys. Feedback from the teachers is always encouraging.'

Barriers were more often:

- The sharing of devices where more than one pupil wanted access at the same time.
- Patchy internet access.
- Data limitations when using mobile access (first lockdown).

The impact of current provision:

Higher levels of engagement in remote learning during the second lockdown.

How is the work planned to address the gaps in learning in the autumn term progressing?

When pupils returned to school at the start of the autumn term it soon became clear that gaps in learning would need to be addressed as a key priority. The assessments undertaken during October confirmed pupil needs were mixed. Although some pupils had maintained regular reading practice and followed the mathematics programme often their writing skills had slipped back. Many pupils were out of touch with the routines of structured learning that is a feature of each school week. The headteacher confirmed gaps were particularly evident in Years 5 and 6; she traces this to the difficulties faced by parents who, despite being keen to help, are not as confident in supporting the learning concepts of these older pupils.

Although staff had commenced delivery of the Recovery Plan during the autumn term much of the early action was on pupils' personal development and welfare as well as a return to core skills. This was terminated abruptly when the second lockdown commenced in January. Consequently leaders, including governors, acknowledge that when the school reopens on the 8th March, the plan will have to be restarted.

How are the plans for using catch up funding helping to close the identified gaps?

The three allocations of funding have been used to engage additional staffing including the release the SENDCO to support pupils and additional resources so that Covid safe procedures could be maintained throughout bubble organisation.

It is too early to be certain about the impact of funding on pupil gains. Further school-based assessments are planned for the summer term when a more reliable picture of gains is anticipated.

What monitoring are you able to carry out under the current circumstances?

Monitoring by school leaders includes:

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- Daily tracking of pupils' access to Tapestry and Class Dojo. Currently around 10% pupils are not engaging with Class Dojo weekly. Although six families have never uploaded onto Dojo, five do pick up a weekly work pack from the office.
- Teachers email the results of the monitoring of remote learning every Friday.
- Autumn term book scrutiny revealed significant gaps in pupils' work.
- Scrutiny of pupil portfolios.
- Baseline assessment in the autumn term.
- Summer term repeat of teacher assessments.

Monitoring staff well-being:

- A staff well-being survey was very positive. Staff are working with the same teams, when in school only teaching children and when at home overseeing home learning. Teachers have been grateful for this and their personal workload commitments, etc. Weekly staff meetings on Google meet/staff WhatsApp group are used to keep in touch.

How are Governors making an effective contribution to leadership and management?

Governors who joined the virtual SIP meeting confirmed the headteacher updates them regularly on the actions taken to support pupils and staff. Governors have organised a programme of strategic Covid agenda virtual meetings to maintain their knowledge of how pupils attending school are being taught safely and how actions are addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Governors are also updated on how staff and pupils' well-being is supported and how school organisation continues to be in line with safeguarding requirements.

Staff have taken advantage of the opportunity to speak to governors, to share their successes and concerns. When it became apparent significant numbers of pupils were returning, at one point this reached 71, governors backed the headteacher when this had to be addressed. The school currently makes provision for two pupils with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). Governors have held a discussion with the SENDCo and reviews for both pupils are on track.

How effective is safeguarding and the welfare monitoring of the pupils working at home?

Safeguarding is reviewed weekly as a staff meeting agenda item. All aspects continue to be delivered in line with agreed protocols. Under the staff rota system, a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) member of staff is always on site. 'Welfare' calls are made every fortnight to remote learning pupils. Zoom is used to see the pupils in their home setting. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) works in partnership with the DSLs. All agency meetings have continued virtually. Staff continue to use CPOMS to record issues such as evidence of aspects of mental health. Safeguarding training continues – all staff and most governors have accessed a 'Prevent' refresher. A Zoom session on safeguarding was provided for all parents children/staff. This covered the 'Acceptable Use Policy'. Consent to this was requested.

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A parent confirmed, 'It's been a challenging time for us all, can't thank you all enough for the support, guidance and keeping the children and staff as safe as possible. Thankyou.'

School information regarding attendance and engagement

How many pupils are attending school?

71 out of 187

Current key worker attendance is typically 49 – 59 pupils each day who are taught in 4 bubbles.

17 vulnerable pupils are attending school.

How many pupils are learning remotely?

116 out of 187

How many staff are able to work in school?

25 out of 28

Only one family is not engaged in remote learning.

Derek Sleightholme

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