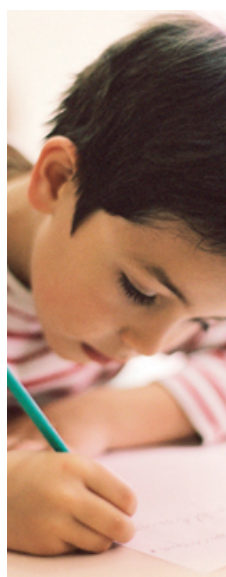


2021

School Improvement Service Note of Visit December 2021 Ashmount Primary School



Islington School
Improvement Service

School Improvement undertook a review with senior leaders at the school. The one-day review was part of the whole school monitoring activities undertaken by senior leaders at Ashmount Primary School. The focus of the review was on the teaching of Phonics, Writing in KS2 and maths across the school. Discussions with pupils were planned and undertaken and a sample of pupils were listened to as part of the review of phonics teaching across the school.

Overall Summary:

Leaders at Ashmount have remained ambitious for pupils in the school. In particular, they have remained robust in all that they do, so that pupils at the school receive the highest quality education that they deserve. This lens on learning, since the return to face to face teaching has made a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

School leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching across the school. As a result, pupils are benefiting from daily high quality learning. Leaders continue to monitor subjects across the school and are able to finesse elements of the various programmes of study the school has chosen to use. Leadership of core subjects (Phonics, Reading, Writing and Maths) are firmly embedded across the school.

Pupils' behaviour at the school displayed consistently high levels of respect for others. They made a positive contribution in creating a learning environment that fostered learning. They were highly motivated and persistent in their approach to learning and supported the well-being of other pupils.

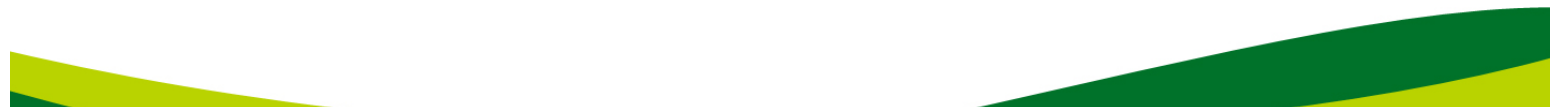
At the time of the review, the SCR was not checked.

Phonics:

The school has chosen one of the DfE validated phonics schemes: [Read, Write, Inc. Phonics scheme](#) to teach phonics at the school. The children in Reception and KS1 actively take part in small group daily phonics sessions. Before the end of Year 2, it is the schools expectation that the vast majority of children will be fluent readers and will no longer need explicit phonics teaching for reading. For children who need extra practice, one-to-one tuition takes place for no more than twenty minutes each afternoon.

School leaders have invested significant CPD opportunities so that RML is embedded and they have been rigorous in their monitoring and feedback to staff. This has resulted in pupils at the school benefitting from high quality lessons.

During the learning walk with school leaders, the teaching of phonics seen during the morning was exceptional. All staff have benefited from high quality training and support. Lessons are well organised, pace is good and routines for pupils are well established



throughout the school. As a result, low level disruption is very rare and teachers and pupils are able to focus on learning.

Three pupils were listened to. Their decodable book was well matched to their phase of phonics and as a result, they could confidently demonstrate effective use of phonics skills when reading and a developing sense of comprehension.

Writing in Upper Key Stage 2 (Years 4/5/6):

During the learning walk across Upper Key Stage 2, it was evident that the teaching of writing was underpinned by high-quality texts. These texts are carefully selected and range from picture books to longer novels. During the learning walk, pupils were using the following texts to inform their writing:

- Year 6 – two animation text – “The Piano” and “Monkey Symphony”
- Year 5 – “Kensuke’s Kingdom” – Michael Morpurgo
- Year 4 – “The Lost Thing” – Shaun Tan

Writing units of work are now a rolling 3-week programme. Leaders made this decision, so that pupils could fully immerse themselves into the demands and depths of the English writing curriculum. Throughout the learning walk, low-level disruption was very rare due to lessons being well prepared, purposeful and engaging. Work in pupils’ books was good and evidence a particular focus on developing writing skills following the return to face to face learning.

In Year 6, a new unit of work was commencing so; teachers were examining the writing technique known as “flashback” with pupils. Effective and well planned questioning supporting pupils to identify how, why and when this technique was used by the writer and the effect this has on the reader. Comparisons to another animation highlighted how the same technique was used in a more complex way and therefore changed the tone and complexity of the narrative.

In Year 5, pupils were at the end of a unit of work linked to Kensuke’s Kingdom. Pupils were writing a letter to Kensuke, about what had changed for them as the main character, “Michael”. Pupils were using their work from previous lessons to help inform them of what to include in the letter. Teachers responded effectively to the needs to pupils, and used whole class teacher modelling of writing to support pupils who needed it. Learning was appropriately scaffolded, so that all pupils could succeed.

In Year 4, pupils were writing a new character description. Again, pupils were drawing upon previous learning and referring to their books, which had captured the planning process. Teachers were supporting pupils appropriately throughout the lesson.

Maths:



In Upper Key Stage 2, White Rose is used to support the teaching and learning of Maths. In KS1 and lower KS2 the chosen scheme is Maths No Problem. School leaders are currently making an informed decision about both programmes. Both are working well to meet the needs of pupils in the school.

During the learning walk, the following mathematical concepts were being taught to pupils:

- Year 6 – prior learning of fractions was being explored with a focus on retrieving long term memory of known facts and teachers were intervening to clarify misconceptions. During this time, teachers moved pupils seamlessly develop their understanding and mastery of subtracting fractions. Pupils were engaged and teachers skilfully managed the session through effective questioning.
- Year 5 – pupils were exploring the concept of area of compound shapes. Effective step by step modelling and questioning by teachers support pupils to develop a mastery of the concept. Effective questioning and through the exploration of effective strategies meant that all pupils ways of working were valued but that there was a focus on the most appropriate and efficient method to achieve the correct answer. There was highly effective scaffolding in place for all learners to achieve well in the lesson.
- Y4 – pupils were exploring division of 3 digit numbers by 1 digit – effective modelling and support for targeted pupils was in place. Pupils were drawing on their knowledge and understanding of multiplication to support them in mastering the concept.

Interviews with subject leaders for English and Maths:

All leaders demonstrated an ambition for their subject. They spoke with confidence and passion in relation to the subject intent, its implementation and impact on pupils at the school.

In maths for example, there was a clarity of priorities for example, the importance of developing mathematical fluency, reasoning skills and the importance of vocabulary. This focus supported the school to adopt a mastery approach to the teaching of mathematics in the school. The mastery approach is underpinned by developing staff to understand the importance of prior knowledge, the use of the concrete, pictorial, abstract approach to learning and ensuring that learning was broken into small steps that secured mastery of bigger concepts. Similarly, in English, leaders spoke about the importance of reading, writing and Oracy skills, underpinned by high quality texts. English leads promote the enjoyment of reading from the EYFS to the end of Key Stage 2. They spoke with enthusiasm about the importance of storytelling, the use of reading records, of the Reading Road Map, and how they have a particular focus on reading for pleasure during the soft start time at the beginning of the school day. All leaders talked in depth about the importance of how

both subjects contributed to life long learning. Leaders were confident in articulating their subject and awareness of the protected characteristics linked to the Equality Act.

Leaders use a range of evidence to measure the impact their subjects are having on pupils at the school. Regular and proportionate learning walks, lesson observations, book looks, discussions with teachers, including interviews with pupils build a coherent and consistent picture of learning across the school. Leaders are able to finesse the subjects they lead to ensure that the pupils at the school gain the full benefit of the national curriculum.

Leaders make effective use of assessment to inform areas of focus have a higher profile in their relevant subject. This is particularly the case as pupils have returned to full time face to face learning since September. The use of assessment has been used to adapt the schools use of pupil premium and recovery funding to target those pupils who need it most.

Pupil Voice and hearing pupils read:

Pupils spoke with confidence about the subjects they were learning at the school. They could articulate knowledge and skills in a variety of subjects. They were able to talk about learning science, history and geography as well as learning in maths and writing. They talked passionately about the reading curriculum in the school.

Three pupils were heard reading. Pupils from KS1 and they were able to bring well-matched decodable books linked to the relevant stage of phonics. Pupils read with confidence and fluency. Pupils were using appropriate phonics strategies to support their ability to read. Pupils were confident in knowing the difference between “green” and “red” words. As a result, pupils were able to discuss their understanding of what they were reading with confidence.

Next Steps:

- Continue to build on the ambitious leadership of national curriculum subjects
- Continue to develop the school website, so that the full depth and breadth of the national curriculum is a unique feature of the school
- Continue to develop pupils Oracy skills to strengthen their ability to discuss their learning.

Yours sincerely



Anthony Doudle
Head of School Improvement
School Improvement Service



