

Hertfordshire Improvement Partner report

2020-21 Autumn term visit – Primary school version

School	Giles Nursery and Infants School	Number	160	Date	01.12.2020
Present	Rouane Mendel (Headteacher); Judith Garley (Deputy Headteacher, Year 2 Class Teacher); Lisa Hill (English and Phonics Subject Leader and Year 2 Class Teacher); Emma McPartland (Mathematics Subject Leader and SENCo – non class based); and Carole Hintridge (Hertfordshire Improvement Partner):				

Purpose of the visit:

- to support leaders to explore the school's approach and/or success in 'recovering the curriculum'
- to ensure that leaders are aware of the publication of 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2020)
- to help leaders to identify the most pertinent school improvement priorities

Purpose of the form:

- to support the planning of the autumn term visit
- to record the findings of the visit and resulting actions

Record of liaison with the headteacher:

The headteacher and HIP discussed the autumn term visit through email during which the visit activities were agreed. In preparation for this, the HIP had sent the HIP visit report to explain the rationale for the chosen focus areas and the headteacher prepared a timetable for activities. The prepared substantial notes in advance of the visit and shared these with the HIP.

Activities

- Interviews with English subject leader, mathematics subject leader, a class teacher and headteacher to explore curriculum recovery
- An interview with headteacher to explore attendance, remote learning and school priorities for the coming year
- Pupil voice with topic books
- A selection of collaborative books including those which showcase mathematics in Reception Class, Big Writes and Hatching chicks
- Feedback and agreed actions
- A walk around early years foundation stage and key stage 1 after pupils had gone home

Recovering the curriculum

All staff spoken to by the HIP talked in great detail to explain how the recovery of the curriculum had taken place in the summer term. Key elements of learning were identified in core and foundation subjects and creative ways were sought to incorporate missed learning with the intended curriculum. Thorough and detailed meetings allowed staff to pin point which areas of the curriculum journey, in each year group, had not been covered due to the partial school closure in March 2020. This included identifying missed vocabulary, which is high focus for the school.

As pupils returned in the summer, low-stakes assessments took place so that teachers were able to reactivate prior learning. The HIP was shown detailed gaps analysis and interventions designed to meet the needs of the pupils. All pupils who did not return until September have been tracked carefully with targeted interventions to address gaps in their learning. As a strategic response, a support teacher and catch up champions have been employed to work with pupils to undertake assessments, identify gaps in learning and work with teachers to plan a support and evidenced based intervention package, which is delivered in small groups and one to one. Interventions focus on identified, specific needs, and are delivered by appropriately trained staff, which includes the catch up champions. The school's sports apprentice is providing additional support to those pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant (PPG) and those with SEND to improve gross and fine motor skills. Close monitoring of the interventions takes place in order to track progress effectively. Early parent consultations were held to support pupils settling into school and for families to share their lockdown experiences with staff. The consistently good level of attendance since the beginning of term (96.4%) indicates that parents are confident that the school keeps their children safe. Parent feedback has been very positive. Particular attention has been focused on the well-being of the community. 'Growth and Well-being Week' was innovative in connecting missed learning in science with mindfulness and yoga workshops. It also provided a launch pad to re-establish the school's work on growth mindset and the importance of physical activity, including Forest Schools, in supporting pupils to live healthy lives. Additional furniture and resources have been purchased to provide break out spaces and individual learning stations for pupils who require additional support. Further development of the outside space is currently in progress. The school seeks to ensure all space is fit for purpose and meets the needs of its pupils. This is very much supported by the staff's attention to detail in exceptional displays and areas of interest around the school and in classrooms. The entrance hall, with its Christmas Advent tree and beautiful library full of attractive reading material, is a warm and welcoming environment. Display boards showcase pupils' learning and celebrate achievements.

The English subject leader reported that fine motor skills, writing stamina and gaps in phonics had been themes across the school that needed to be addressed as part of recovering the curriculum. In addition, the mathematics subject leader noted that recognition of numbers from 0 to 5 in Reception, making of 5 and counting in 2s, 5s and 10s in Year 2 needed to be secured. All staff articulated a range of strategies used to address these areas, for example, use of incidental learning time whilst lining up to practise counting, fluency practice as a morning registration activity and purchasing more manipulatives to support modelling and rehearsing. During a tour of the school, connected activities were evident for pupils to explore in Reception classes. For example, the 'ar' digraph, the focus for the following day, ran through all the child initiated learning opportunities in a creative and engaging way. In Year 2, early morning activities were set up (in a Covid secure manner) for pupils to practise fine motor skills and, therefore, build up hand strength to address writing stamina.

Subject leaders have looked for opportunities to incorporate missed learning by adapting the intended curriculum. For example, the Year 2 curriculum has been adapted to include missed recount writing from Year 1 in the intended unit based on *The Enormous Crocodile* by Roald Dahl. Teachers meet every week to adapt their teaching based on their assessments and gaps analysis. This would suggest that assessment for learning is used effectively to modify the intended curriculum to ensure knowledge and skills are secure.

Leaders discussed the importance of involving parents in the recovery of the curriculum ensuring they receive clear and useful information to support learning from home. This has been especially important for those families who have joined the school since September 2020. Staff report how they miss incidental meetings with parents and how they seek alternative ways of reaching out. The early parent consultations, held face to face, enabled teachers to share key information and give out resource packs. Zoom calls were offered as an alternative to parents who were unable to attend in person. The packs included common exception words, mathematics resources and suggestions for writing sentences. Teachers also used this to survey how many parents were able to access the online learning offer and provided paper based packages as an alternative. One pupil shared his 'Isolation Book' where he had recorded the learning that he had completed whilst needing to self-isolate due to Covid-19. The learning tasks reflected those completed by pupils in school demonstrating that leaders are determined that pupils who are unable to attend school will continue as closely as possible with the intended curriculum. The school newsletter is used to share key vocabulary and new learning. Zoom meetings have been held to explain the phonics screening process. However, in order to reach a wider audience, staff have also recorded the information about the phonics screening process and have made it available on the school's website. The HIP and English subject leader explored ways to harness the hard work the school has undertaken to instil a love for reading with the community, in light of the current Covid-19 restrictions. This is of great importance to the English subject leader in order to mitigate the effect that lockdown has had on parents' ability to read with their children at home. Discussions included adaptations to the much-loved 'reading teddy' initiative and 'Stay and Read'.

The mathematics subject leader talked about the importance of 'buffer zones' built into the curriculum so that staff can deepen learning or address misconceptions and, therefore, secure learning. For example, the Year 2 pupils required longer than originally planned to recover number bonds to 10. Leaders also reference the high levels of staffing, three adults in each class, as a key to supporting pupils effectively in their learning. The mathematics subject leader articulated the desire to challenge the attitude that it is acceptable to be 'rubbish at maths', something she fears is the greatest risk to the quality of education in mathematics at Giles Nursery and Infants' School. Therefore, it is a school priority that real world contexts are represented in the mathematics curriculum and understood by parents. By continuing with themed mathematics weeks and introducing engaging active learning programs such as Maths Jam, the subject leader intends to address barriers to learning.

Pupils spoke positively about mathematics in school and talked about a range of manipulatives they use in class. They were keen to share some of their rapid counting and beamed with pride as they reached their goal. The evidence seen in the 'Mathematics in Reception' book supported a creative, cross-curricular approach to number.

Some pupils reflected on their home learning experience with the HIP. There was a mixed view with some pupils stating 'It was actually quite fun because I could play with my toys when I had finished' and others saying 'It was so hard for me because my brother distracted me.' The Year 2 pupils were unanimous in their love for 'Music on Fridays'.

The same pupils were also very proud when sharing their creation stories with the HIP. They reported that, in school, they had used split pins to join two wheels together and that the pictures helped them to remember the story. The children then took it in turns to retell the seven days of the Christian creation story. The visual prompts served their purpose well and the pupils spoke confidently when retelling the story.

Staff training

Professional development is embedded in the school's ethos. All staff members reported examples of effective staff training and pedagogical discourse. One of the many aspects valued by the staff, spoken to by the HIP, was the emphasis placed on time devoted by the headteacher to developing and sharing staff expertise. Staff enjoy, and speak highly of, the opportunities to take part in action based research such as Assessment for Learning led by Shirley Clark, Diminishing the Difference – Disadvantaged

project and The Word Gap. Leaders report the impact of professional development includes upskilling of staff in a number of strategies that help to identify accurately where pupils are in their learning, support the identification of next steps, breaking targets into small, manageable chunks that are achieved in a timely manner and accelerate pupil progress.

The headteacher outlined the next project, Achievement for All, with the intended outcomes of raising aspirations, access, attainment and achievement for the most vulnerable pupils, which leaders have identified that Covid-19 has had the most negative impact.

Senior leaders have ensured that all staff have received training in regards to necessary health and safety and risk assessments associated with the global pandemic. The updated Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) has been shared with all staff.

As a Steps (therapeutic whole school approach to behaviour management) trained school, refresher training has been carried out at all levels. This is particularly important in order to support the pupils in the most effective way to manage challenging behaviour or changes in behaviour as a result of anxiety related to Covid-19. The SENCo and family support worker have undertaken and disseminated bereavement and attachment disorder training as part of the supportive package in response to Covid-19.

To further secure that staff are in the best position to support recovery of the curriculum, a number of training courses have been attended:

- Phonological awareness assessment with children – Catch Up Champions
- Securing Starting Points for Early Years children – Nursery and Reception teacher
- Early Years (EY) Moderation: Starting Points – All early years teachers
- Making the last term count: closing gaps in English and maths learning - Key Stage 1 – 2 x Y1 teachers, inc. RQT.
- New to Year 2 assessment

Assessment for learning remains a high focus for senior leaders with the headteacher and deputy headteacher attending Herts for Learning's (HfL) 'Assessment – Where Do We Go From Here?' training. This has been disseminated to staff who have also received training to use HfL's 'Easy Tracking' system and prompts for effective attainment and progress discussions have been shared.

The school's marking policy has been revisited and re-worked with staff for maximum impact. It has been made simpler, smarter and easier for pupils to respond immediately to feedback. The deputy headteacher shared examples from the pupils' books with the HIP, where 'in the moment' responses supported the pupils to make amendments to their writing.

Attendance

1 st Sept 2020 – 26 th Nov 2020	Statutory school age	Rec, Y1 and Y2
All	96.4%	96.3%
Ever-FSM	95.3%	93.7%
Current FSM	95.3%	93.7%
All SEND	95.9%	95.5%

The headteacher reports that attendance is tracked carefully and the school's attendance policy is robust:

- Office call home to ascertain reason for absence if not provided.
- Deputy headteacher tracks attendance and persistent absentees.
- Office have list of pupils being monitored and inform deputy headteacher if pupils on the list are absent.
- Deputy headteacher and headteacher meet to agree next steps / actions for individuals including liaison with linked junior school regarding families and siblings (joined up approach).
- Headteacher meets with families to give support.
- Attendance team support with casework.
- Family support worker and SENCo work with vulnerable families.
- There is a personalised approach to meet the individual needs of families with an emphasis on nurture, reassurance and supportive in response to anxiety around Covid-19.

School's own view/evaluation of the quality of education (on the basis of leaders' on-going self-evaluation):	Outstanding Following the Ofsted earlier in the year, senior leaders continue to enhance areas of school life to secure an outstanding judgement. The school's investment in knowledgeable, skilled staff and high quality CPD results in strong curriculum design, which is bespoke to the school's context and challenges. The adaptations to the curriculum as a result of Covid-19 are meeting the well-being needs of the children and to recover prior knowledge in order to catch up and keep up.
HIP comment:	Covid-19 restrictions have limited the range of activities the new HIP has been able to conduct to gather evidence. The exceptional learning environment connected with the discussions taken place during the visit would suggest that the school is in a strong position to secure its goal in due course.
HIP RAYG rating:	Dark green

Agreed Actions

Action	By whom	By when
To explore alternative, Covid secure ways to engage parents to provide effective learning support at home: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in phonics • how to listen and support children to read • promote the love for reading through, for example, teachers modelling reading via video and having multiple copies of books to send home to inspire parents 	English subject leader	Ongoing
To monitor pupil groups' access to on line resources (BUG CLUB) offered by the school, for example, those who are in receipt of PPG and SEN/D.	English subject leader	Ongoing
To continue to monitor that the real world contexts and opportunities for reasoning in mathematics are planned for and shared with parents to champion positive mindsets in this area of the curriculum.	Mathematics subject leader	Ongoing

	Date	Focus
Date and focus of next visit	Thursday, 18th March 2021	TBC

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Date 01.12.2020

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