

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Miss Jane Davies
Headteacher
Fulfen Primary School
Rugeley Road
Burntwood
Staffordshire
WS7 9BJ

Dear Miss Davies

Short inspection of Fulfen Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 May 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school has experienced some significant staff changes since the last inspection, including senior leaders, teachers and support staff. You recognise that this has been a turbulent time for the school. Throughout this period, you have ensured that the quality of pupils' education has not been compromised. Leaders, including governors, are now confident that the school has a stable staffing structure in place.

You and your leadership team are ambitious for all pupils and have high expectations of what you can achieve. Your two assistant headteachers provide you with excellent support, which helps to improve pupils' outcomes. Staff share your determination and work hard to ensure that every pupil gets the best possible start to their school life. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they behave very well. Pupils work hard and are keen to do their best. As a result, the majority of pupils are making good progress in a range of subjects across the curriculum. Many pupils have made strong progress in writing this year because of the focus you place on teaching this crucial skill. Pupils' English books show that they have purposeful opportunities to write at length. For example, pupils in Year 5 wrote detailed, well-organised letters to their local MP about the high sugar content in some food. However, pupils have fewer opportunities to apply their writing skills in other subject areas across the curriculum.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve the way that pupils use grammar

and spelling. You have responded to this successfully. Teachers have strong subject knowledge in spelling, grammar and punctuation because of effective training. They impart this knowledge well. As a result, pupils have a secure understanding of how to apply these important writing skills. In 2017, a higher proportion of pupils than nationally achieved the expected and greater depth standards in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test at the end of key stage 2.

You were also asked to ensure that pupils are set challenging work so that they reach their full potential. Teachers plan tasks carefully to meet the needs of the pupils in their classes, including those who need additional challenge. However, you recognise that some of the most able pupils do not access these tasks quickly enough. This is particularly evident in mathematics, in which some pupils have to complete easier tasks before they move on to harder work.

Governors are supportive of the school. They challenge leaders in order to check the information they receive about the school's performance. As a result, governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and further areas for improvement.

The majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school and agree that their children are making good progress. Several of the parents I spoke to have recently moved their children to the school. They are full of praise for how welcome their children feel and how quickly they have settled. Some parents are concerned about the high number of staff changes but they said that they have positive relationships with their children's current teachers.

Pupils said that they enjoy coming to school and would recommend the school to others. They said that staff are friendly and organise interesting activities and visits. They spoke enthusiastically about visits to the Space Centre and the zoo. Pupils described special days that help them to understand their topics well, for example, 'Ancient Greek workshops' and 'Viking day'. Pupils appreciate the opportunities they have to take on additional responsibilities. They are proud to be prefects because they help younger pupils at lunchtime. Pupils said that behaviour in school is good. One pupil told me, 'We behave well because we want to. We come to learn.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff have appropriate training and regular updates to ensure that their knowledge and understanding of how to keep children safe are up to date. You ensure that your well-organised child protection records are stored securely.

Governors understand their role in overseeing and monitoring the effectiveness of school safeguarding procedures. They ensure that rigorous checks are made on the suitability of adults to work in school.

All staff who responded to the online questionnaire and most of the parents agree that children are safe and well cared for. A small number of parents have some

concerns that the school does not deal with bullying effectively. During the inspection, I did not find evidence that pupils are unhappy. The pupils I spoke to are confident that any problems in relation to poor behaviour are dealt with rapidly.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I wanted to find out what leaders are doing to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress in key stage 2, particularly in writing. This is because there was a decline in the rates of pupils' progress over the last two years. You have made sure that improving progress in writing is a high priority. You, together with other senior leaders, have ensured that teachers know the needs of individual pupils very well. Teachers use their accurate assessment of pupils' writing to ensure that they plan activities that move pupils' learning on as quickly as possible. Teachers have a high expectation of the vocabulary, grammar and punctuation that pupils include in their writing. In most classes, pupils are making strong progress.
- Pupils take care with the presentation of their written work. They have opportunities to produce many different types of writing including reports, stories, poems and letters. Occasionally, teachers link writing tasks to the wider curriculum. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their writing skills in a wide range of subjects.
- You have provided training for all staff in order to enhance their subject knowledge of mathematics. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to apply their calculation skills regularly when problem solving and reasoning. Sometimes, the most able pupils have to complete the same work as pupils who are of middle ability before they can complete the more difficult tasks. This can lead to a lack of challenge for some of the most able pupils, which slows their progress.
- At the start of the inspection, we agreed that I would check the quality of teaching of phonics in key stage 1. This is because the proportion of pupils who achieved the required standard in the phonics screening check in 2017 was significantly lower than the national average. Phonics is taught very well. Parents of pupils in Year 1 told me they are impressed with the progress their children have made in reading. Pupils enjoy phonics lessons and have plenty of opportunities to practise their skills when reading and writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities now make strong progress in a range of subjects across the curriculum. This is because of the relentless drive of you and the inclusion leader to ensure that this group of pupils get the support they need. Pupils benefit from well-planned interventions that support their learning in reading, writing and mathematics. Parents of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities praised the additional support that their children receive.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have more opportunities to apply their writing skills in a wide range of subjects
- teachers plan work that is sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils to ensure that they make the progress of which they are capable.

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

Yours sincerely

Jo Evans
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and your two assistant headteachers, your business manager and other members of staff. I met with representatives of the governing body and I spoke to a representative from the local authority on the telephone. I scrutinised the school's single central record and I viewed a range of safeguarding documentation. I also looked at your self-evaluation and school improvement documentation.

Together, we visited classes where we observed teaching and learning, spoke to pupils and looked at the work in some pupils' books. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.

I met informally with parents and I took account of the 141 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 80 free-text responses. I also took account of six responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.