

PROTECT-INSPECTION



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Louise Pickard
Westlands Primary School
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Westlands
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ST5 2QY

Dear Mrs Pickard

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Westlands Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 September 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks also to the Chair of the Governing Body, the representative of the local authority and your pupils, who were unwaveringly polite and friendly.

There have been no significant contextual changes since the last inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 19 January 2012, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

At the last inspection, achievement and the quality of teaching were both judged satisfactory but rigour and drive from the leadership of the school were found to be lacking. The headteacher had been in post for only a few weeks at the time. She responded with alacrity and urgency and has quickly instilled vigour and direction into the school's work. New policies have been developed which provide clarity for the staff about exactly what is expected from them, for example, in marking pupils' books. There are regular and extremely thorough processes for monitoring the quality of teachers' work. These include checking their lesson planning every week; evaluating their use of assessment in helping pupils improve; observations of teaching; and discussions with pupils about the quality of learning their experience. The headteacher holds a meeting with every teacher once a term to discuss the progress of individual pupils within each class and to ascertain what additional

support, if any, pupils who are falling behind might need to help them catch up. The meetings are also used to hold teachers to account for the overall progress of pupils in their class and this informs the school's performance management process. The regularity and rigour of monitoring have improved the quality of teaching which the school now judges to be good overall. This is consistent with observations conducted during this inspection and consistent too with independent monitoring conducted by the local authority.

In all three lessons visited during this inspection, pupils were given differing targets and work to do dependent upon their teacher's assessment of their prior learning. For instance, in a Year 2 lesson where pupils were learning about the use of adjectives, similes and alliteration, higher attaining pupils wrote fully-formed sentences. Lower attaining pupils were well supported by a teaching assistant in sounding out unfamiliar words printed on cards which they then matched to the corresponding areas of the picture they related to. This differentiated approach enabled all pupils in the class to make good progress relative to their starting points. The pace of learning is generally good although sometimes teachers do not move the higher attaining pupils in their class onto the next activity quickly enough. Behaviour is good. Pupils are attentive and have good attitudes to learning. Classrooms are bright and attractive with some eye-catching display work. Attendance is above average.

The local authority's statement of action, which was drawn up following the last inspection, was judged to be fit for purpose by Ofsted. It provides additional funding to release senior leaders to engage in the extensive monitoring arrangements but also provides targeted training. Staff are appreciative of the good training they received from a local authority literacy consultant, the impact of which is seen in the strong focus teachers now give to correcting and improving pupils' spelling, grammar and use of punctuation when marking pupils' work. Some middle leaders have received coaching in how rigorously to monitor the quality of provision in their subject and additional time has been provided for them to do this. However, although the quality of monitoring by middle leaders has improved, it is not secure yet and further training is planned. Members of the governing body were less appreciative of the training they received in 'strengthening governance' but nevertheless this did prompt them to begin to ask more challenging questions of the school and to involve themselves in checking the quality of work in pupils' books on a regular basis. Additional meetings are held to monitor the progress the school is making against the local authority's statement of action and the governing body is beginning to ask probing questions about its performance. Senior leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body speak highly of the good support they receive from the local authority representative attached to the school.

There is a very well organised and detailed tracking system for collating assessments and monitoring the progress pupils make. The mostly good and better teaching that pupils are now experiencing has improved the progress they are make over time so that in the 2012 national tests for Year 6, attainment in English was better than the

comparable national figures. Attainment in mathematics, however, only improved marginally and remained similar to the national average. An analysis of the progress made by all classes last year shows the school's challenging target for 80% of pupils to make two or more sub-levels of progress during the year was met or exceeded in every year group. This represents good achievement and a notable improvement from the satisfactory achievement seen at the time of the last inspection. Again, progress was stronger in English than in mathematics, partly due to the much greater emphasis teachers gave last year to developing literacy skills. The headteacher recognises the need to bring achievement in mathematics up to the level already reached in English this year.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Anstead
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012

- Ensure pupils attain higher standards and make good progress by:
 - making sure that teachers use assessment information to plan precisely the next steps of learning for each pupil
 - increasing the pace of learning in lessons so that pupils spend more time actively engaged in work
 - making sure that teachers' marking clearly identifies strengths and areas for improvement and pupils have time to respond to useful feedback
 - giving more attention to developing pupils' writing skills such as sentence structure, grammar and punctuation.

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - establishing a rigorous cycle of monitoring which includes an evaluation of teachers' lesson planning, a review of the quality of work in pupils' books and an analysis of termly assessment information so that pupils' progress can be constantly monitored
 - ensuring that lesson observations focus on pupils' learning and the resulting feedback clearly evaluates the impact of teaching on pupils' progress
 - setting challenging targets, so an increasing proportion of pupils make two sub-levels of progress each year in reading, writing and mathematics
 - making staff accountable for the progress of pupils through monitoring pupils' progress towards their challenging targets
 - developing the skills of middle leaders so they can effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility
 - improving the effectiveness of the governing body to provide constructive challenge by holding the school's leaders to account for pupils' performance.