

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Roddy Fairclough
Newbury Park Primary School
Perryman's Farm Road
Barkingside
Ilford Essex
IG2 7LB

Dear Mr Fairclough

Short inspection of Newbury Park School

Following my visit, with John Lambern HMI, to the school on 3 November 2015, 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 July 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since joining the school in September 2014, you have realised that the capacity for leaders to secure improvements was limited, as middle leaders were ineffective in driving school improvement. You have strengthened the leadership team at both senior and middle levels. In September 2015, you appointed four additional assistant headteachers, who, together with an existing assistant headteacher, take responsibility for key phases. In the summer term 2015, you appointed an additional deputy headteacher, to lead on teaching, learning, assessment and the curriculum, to complement the senior leadership team. These actions have bolstered the capacity of leaders considerably at all levels, resulting in key improvements in the school's performance.

Roles and responsibilities have been reviewed. They are sharply focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in all key stages and in the early years, to raise achievement. Your ambitious drive for excellence is understood and shared by governors, leaders and most staff.

You have quickly tackled pockets of underachievement and weak teaching with determination and resolve. Teachers are now held fully to account for the progress their pupils make. Checks on teaching are used to identify tailored training and support that meet individual teachers' needs. Senior leaders have dedicated time to coach and mentor all staff. This includes all teachers, particularly those who are in the early stages of their career and those who are identified as requiring intensive support, as well as those newly appointed to their middle leadership roles. Staff told inspectors they value this support and training and fully appreciate that the quality of teaching is the cornerstone of the school's success. You have achieved a great deal in a short space of time, providing solid foundations on which the school can continue to grow and flourish.

The large school community is one of immense diversity, as pupils are from a wide range of ethnic heritages. The strong relationships, and commitment by all staff to promote the well-being of pupils, create an exceptionally harmonious ethos. Pupils are highly respectful and tolerant of each other. They understand and appreciate differences between people, including those from different faiths and cultures. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. Pupils have an excellent work ethic and strive to achieve their best.

Parents are fully supportive of the school and appreciate the workshops and family learning courses they attend to help them to support their child's learning. As a consequence, this area for improvement, identified at the time of the last inspection, has been successfully addressed.

You have accurately assessed the progress made towards the other areas for improvement found at the last inspection. Your evaluation of the school's performance confirms a school that was previously underperforming, but is now on an upward journey towards excellence. You, together with other leaders, have pinpointed precisely what the school's priorities are, and thereafter what actions you need to take to secure continuous improvement as outlined in the school development plan. For example, you have identified the need to bring the provision in the Nursery up to the same high standard as that in the Reception classes. You are also aware that writing could be improved further by making crystal clear to pupils what they are going to learn and how they can work successfully.

Safeguarding is effective.

In January 2015, the existing deputy headteacher took on the role of the designated safeguarding lead. As a result, this aspect of the school's work has been strengthened. She has made sure that all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. There is a clear expectation and agreement that all staff and governors have a collective responsibility to keep pupils safe and secure. Training has been undertaken at the appropriate level and is up to date. As a result, all staff have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures. This includes the school's duty to report any suspected cases of female genital mutilation and to protect pupils

from radicalisation. Recent initiatives to improve attendance rates and punctuality, such as the 'Punctuality Panda', are bearing fruit, as both aspects are improving rapidly. As a consequence, pupils are kept very safe. They know how to keep themselves safe from a wide range of potential dangers, including cyber-bullying.

Inspection findings

- Governors have made a considerable investment in judicious key appointments to bolster the capacity of the leadership team. Newly appointed leaders have a proven track record of school improvement. Governors are well informed about the school's performance. They undertake focused visits to check on progress, and ask challenging questions to make sure that leaders secure improvement.
- Senior leaders model effective leadership skills, including how to check the quality of planning. They also make sure that teachers are carrying out all the school's requirements for teaching and learning, through observations and work sampling.
- Leaders at all levels feel instrumental in moving the school forward rapidly. For example, the early years leader has wasted no time in transforming the Reception classes. Her outstanding practice is an inspiration to all. Both the indoor and outside classrooms are a hive of valuable learning activities. Adults intervene to support and extend children's learning well. Currently, Reception children make phenomenal progress, especially in their early literacy and mathematical skills. Nonetheless, although some improvements have been made in the Nursery, overall provision remains much weaker than in Reception.
- Although implementation of the new curriculum is relatively recent, it is clearly motivating all pupils, particularly the boys, who are fully engaged in their learning. This is because pupils now find activities relevant and stimulating. Assessments have also been refined.
- Children join the Nursery with vastly different starting points. Some have skills that are typical for their age and others have skills that are below, particularly in language and communication. Overall achievement in the early years has improved since the last inspection, because progress takes off in the Reception Year. Consequently, most children achieve a good level of development.
- Attainment has also risen at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. Nonetheless, fewer pupils achieve the higher levels, particularly disadvantaged pupils in reading and mathematics. At Key Stage 2, some differences remain between subjects. Attainment in mathematics has been consistently well above average, as a result of higher attaining pupils achieving well. Nevertheless, too few pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, achieve the higher levels in reading and writing in this key stage, resulting in only average attainment in both subjects.
- The leadership of literacy is now the responsibility of a core team of leaders. As a result, pupils are now systematically taught phonics skills (the sounds letters represent) to enable them to tackle unfamiliar words in their reading. Pupils read interesting and stimulating texts daily. This is developing their comprehension skills, fluency and expression well. There are attractive reading areas, to develop

pupils' love of reading. This is securing better progress in this subject. Nonetheless, too few pupils make as rapid progress in writing as they do in mathematics.

- Observations and work in books confirm that pupils are not always informed well enough about what they are going to learn and what they need to do to achieve success, especially in writing. Equally, the most-able pupils are not always provided with work that makes them think hard, because they complete the same work as other pupils before completing a challenging activity.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- all weaker teaching is eliminated, by making sure that all teachers provide greater challenge for high-attaining pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils; and insisting that teachers systematically inform pupils clearly about what they are going to learn, and what steps they need to take to be successful, especially in writing
- the Nursery provision matches that in Reception classes as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you, other senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers, including support staff. They met with members of the governing body, including the Chair, and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, minutes of meetings, information on the progress of pupils and the single central record. Inspectors interviewed a group of pupils, and spoke to them informally at other times during the inspection. Inspectors listened to pupils read, and visited a number of lessons to gather evidence on particular aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.