

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



17 December 2015

Mrs Sheila Mercer
Headteacher
Woodlands Primary Academy
Church Walk
Bradwell
Great Yarmouth
Norfolk
NR31 8QQ

Dear Mrs Mercer

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodlands Primary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 10 December 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement, identified at the recent section 5 inspection, in order to become a good academy.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the Director of Education from the Creative Education Academies Trust with another member of the trust, the Chair of the Governing Body (also a member of the trust), pupils, staff and parents as they brought their children to school, to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. The Academy Development and Improvement Plan, and the Review of Progress Against Ofsted Key Issues were evaluated. I observed teaching and learning with senior leaders. I scrutinised assessment records, minutes of governing body meetings, reviews undertaken by the trust and the single central register of checks on staff's suitability to work with children.

Context

There are now no temporary members of staff. An assistant headteacher was appointed shortly after the June 2015 inspection and five new class teachers started working at the academy in September 2015. A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in October 2015. Following the departure of the leader for mathematics, you have taken on that role.

Main findings

Senior leaders, staff, the governing body and the trust are tackling the most important areas for development with urgency. All are determined to provide a good standard of education for pupils as soon as possible. The right things are in place and the momentum identified in the June 2015 report has continued this term. Staff, pupils and parents feel positive about the new academic year.

The arrangements put in place by the assistant headteacher to support the new teachers have worked well. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved, not only for the pupils in their classes but also for the whole provision, because the new staff bring new ideas and perspectives for others to reflect upon. Parents and pupils are pleased that there are permanent staff now. Parents say that communication with teachers has improved. Pupils say that behaviour has improved and that all teachers now check their work carefully to make sure that they understand what is taught.

The presentation of pupils' work has improved to the point that staff now expect neat handwriting and well-organised written work. Pupils are proud of the work in their books and the work on display. They know that staff expect high-quality presentation. You have already established with staff that, from the start of the spring term, the focus will be on high-quality content in pupils' written work. This goal has been made much more achievable as a result of teachers' more rigorous and accurate assessment and feedback to pupils. The pupils like the feedback and conscientiously take notice of the comments. In addition, they like the immediate help from staff when they find the work difficult or when misunderstandings are pointed out to them. This not only means that mistakes are addressed quickly and effectively, but it also works well to develop pupils' confidence.

Better quality teaching and assessment have improved pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar. For some pupils, this has involved going right back to the basics so that there is no doubt about how to construct sentences accurately and how to blend sounds carefully for spelling and reading. There is still some work to do to enable older pupils to spell and read at the level of competence expected for their age.

You have invested in additional resources to support teaching and learning. This has improved the opportunities for pupils across the academy to develop their reading skills, and for outdoor learning for the youngest children.

Teachers' assessments of pupils' achievements over the academic year 2014–15 accurately reflect results from the national tests for the end of the year, as well as the checks made externally through moderated work. Your tracking of assessments is thorough and staff know the expectations for pupils in their classes for the end of the academic year. However, these expectations are not clearly stated as measures for success in the action plan or your self-evaluation. The action plan needs reviewing to clarify:

- sharp measurements for success that are based on specific improvements to teaching and pupils' learning
- the distinction between the actions to take and the difference that these actions will make to pupils' performance each term
- who is responsible for implementing the actions and who will evaluate the difference that the actions make, and that those responsible for evaluating should be different from those responsible for taking action.

In the short time since the appointment, the new Chair of the Governing Body has already added rigour to governance. The Chair has, quite rightly, requested additional and more detailed information about the academy's performance. Since the June 2015 inspection, membership of the governing body has changed and there has not been the same challenge to senior staff as before. Plans are securely in place to remedy this from the beginning of the spring term.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The trust are responsible for governance and also provide a useful layer of additional and external challenge to the academy's work. When the academy did not have a Chair of the Governing Body, the trust acted quickly to fill the vacancy and this has ensured a period of stability for governance. The trust is very determined that staff will bring about the required improvements. It provides support as well as challenge. Staff are in no doubt that the trust will hold them to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' performance.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Chair of Creative Education Trust and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley

Her Majesty's Inspector