

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



26 February 2016

Clare Askwith
Headteacher
Monkton Infants' School
St Simon Street
South Shields
Tyne and Wear
NE34 9SD

Dear Mrs Askwith

Short inspection of Monkton Infants' School

Following my visit to the school on 26 January 2016, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2010.

This school continues to be good.

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

Despite a period of some turbulence in staffing, you have ensured that your pupils continue to make good progress from their starting points in the Nursery to leaving your school at the end of Year 2. Governors, staff and parents are rightly proud that your pupils leave the school with outcomes that are significantly above the national average year on year.

In both your acting and substantive headteacher roles, your microscopic analysis of the school's assessment information has accurately identified areas which require development. You have correctly prioritised the most important actions and ensured that teaching staff are well trained to tackle them. Your decisive actions are bearing fruit. For example, in the check on phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) in Year 1, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard increased dramatically in 2015. Consequently, pupils were well prepared for the increased demands of the curriculum in Year 2.

Your ambition for the pupils, the staff and the school shines through in all that you do. You are completely honest and extremely open about the strengths and areas for development in the school. You do not hesitate to use external advice and support to improve outcomes for your pupils, especially in the early years.

At the previous inspection of the predecessor school, three areas for improvement were outlined. First, to raise pupils' attainment from average to high. Second, to improve pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism. Third, to improve the effectiveness of community cohesion. You have ensured that these areas for improvement have remained a high priority since the school became an academy. Pupils make good progress throughout their time in school and you are committed to improving their attainment at the end of the early years. Similarly, since becoming substantive headteacher, you have overhauled the systems and procedures to monitor absences and reward regular attendance. Very early indicators are that the pupils enjoy the rewards but that some parents still do not ensure their children are in school, on time, every day. Your work to develop the curriculum has ensured that the pupils are aware of those less fortunate than themselves. They have an increased awareness of the different communities beyond their own school community.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding has high priority in school and that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's safeguarding policies are updated regularly and staff are well aware of the statutory duty to address extremism and radicalisation. Pupils told me that they feel very safe, secure and happy in school. They know that rare instances of silly behaviour and name-calling are dealt with promptly and effectively by adults. You acknowledge that the nature and instances of poor behaviour are not yet reported to the governing body on a regular basis and have taken immediate steps to address this shortfall in procedures.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have high ambitions for the pupils, staff and school. This is exemplified by the school's procedures and practices to appraise the performance of staff. Leaders and governors tackle difficult staffing issues resolutely and with integrity.
- You are determined that your school should provide an outstanding education for your pupils and you evaluate the school's progress with absolute honesty. As a result, all leaders and governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and, more importantly, areas for development, and can rank them in order of importance. Leaders know what needs doing now!
- Attendance remains stubbornly low and persistent absence is higher than average. In addition, too many pupils are late for school. You have introduced a new reward system which has been well received by the pupils. They all want to receive a teddy at the end of term for 100% attendance. However, more work needs to be undertaken with the parents of your pupils so that they understand the importance of their children attending school every day and on time. Some pupils, who are consistently late, miss their maths challenge every morning because their parents fail to get them into school in time to take part.

- Leaders accurately identified that standards in mathematics, although above average, are declining over time at the end of Key Stage 1. Leaders also identified that girls' attainment and progress in mathematics was a particular cause for concern. You took immediate action to rectify this situation and the most recent assessment information indicates that girls are achieving at least as well as boys in mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils that reached the standard in the Year 1 phonics check was well below average in both 2013 and 2014. The leadership team took very effective action in response to this. They ensured teachers and teaching assistants accessed high-quality training and purchased a range of software to support the acquisition of letters and sounds. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving the standard rose by 24% in 2015 to just below average. The subject leader's newly implemented and very effective system to track the progress of pupils in the acquisition of phonics knowledge indicates that over 90% of pupils are currently working at the level which would be expected at this point in the academic year.
- Disadvantaged pupils, those who are eligible for extra support funded by the pupil premium given to the school, reach standards at the end of Key Stage 1 which are equal to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. This is a strength of the school. However, the additional funding in the early years is not yet spent effectively and disadvantaged children do not catch up quickly enough to reach the expected level by the end of the Reception Year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- pupils in all year groups attend school on time, and every day unless too ill
- the progress of children in the early years improves, particularly those who are disadvantaged, so they make at least typical progress, and catch up where needed to reach a good level of development at the end of this key stage.

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short, one-day, inspection I met with you, five members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, the external school improvement adviser and a group of six pupils from Year 2. I visited all seven classrooms with you and spoke with middle leaders and pupils about their work and experience of the

school. I also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work in mathematics. I studied a range of documents including the school's safeguarding policies, minutes of meetings of the governing body, your reports to governors, reports from the school improvement adviser and up-to-date assessment information. I talked to parents in the playground before school started, and took account of 14 responses to Parent View and the school's own survey of parental views.