

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



14 March 2016

Mr Rik Meek
Cockington Primary School
Old Mill Road
Torquay
Devon
TQ2 6AP

Dear Mr Meek

Short inspection of Cockington Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 February 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

- You, your leadership team and governors are using your good blend of skills to drive improvements for all at Cockington Primary School. You articulate a clear vision for the school. You and the current leadership team have established a culture where training and staff development are at the heart of your efforts. Despite significant turbulence in leadership during the past 18 months, the quality of education remains good. Parents recognise that there has been a period of change for the school, but the overwhelming majority support the actions being taken. The substantial improvements made to pupils' attendance, the quality of the curriculum, and outcomes for children in Reception, including in phonics (the sounds that letters make), are illustrative of the leaders' collective capacity for further improvements.
- Your approach to improving the quality of teaching is effective. High-quality, regular training and coaching for staff, regardless of their career stage, enhance their skills and ensure that they know pupils' academic and personal needs well. Staff at all levels reflect on their training and feedback through 'learning conversations' and work well with each other to improve their practice. New staff are also well supported. Your leadership team is carefully deployed to maximise strengths and use areas of expertise across the school for the positive benefit of all pupils.

- You have carefully managed the building project and the large number of changes to the leadership team that occurred during the previous year. Effective support has ensured that you remained focused on improving the achievement of pupils at the school. You, as well as staff and governors, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school action plans address the key priorities and clearly set out what you aim to achieve. All staff and governors have contributed to identifying the improvement priorities and have helped to draw up action plans. Consequently, they all feel involved and fully understand the part they play in securing improvements. Your open style of leadership has created a culture where improving teaching and its impact on learning is your core purpose.
- Pupils' achievement across the school is good because you and your senior team have a clear understanding of what good learning looks like. Your rigorous improvement plans and well-considered actions have halted the decline in performance last year and are quickly raising pupils' achievement to their previous high levels. In 2014, the proportion of boys in Reception reaching the standards expected in writing and number was low. Decisive action to strengthen leadership of the early years provision and improve teaching raised outcomes to above the national average in 2015. Similarly, in 2015, boys and disadvantaged pupils achieved lower than expected outcomes in the Year 1 phonics check. The same pupils, now in Year 2, have rapidly made up ground and are on track to make the expected standard by the end of the year.

Safeguarding is effective.

- You and the business manager ensure that all recruitment procedures and checks are rigorously carried out. Training for all staff is frequent, detailed and up to date, enabling them to carry out their duties effectively. Recent training on the government's Prevent strategy provides you and all staff with a good understanding of how to keep pupils safe from the risk of exposure to extreme views. Your approach to improving pupils' punctuality and more regular attendance has been highly successful. Historically, pupils supported through the pupil premium were absent too often. This term, such absence has largely been eradicated. You are also working with families to encourage pupils to attend the breakfast club. Consequently, pupils are much better prepared and ready for learning. Rewards, such as the prospect of winning a bike for high attendance, are appreciated by parents and pupils. Pupils' attendance is now above the national average.

- All staff know individual pupils and their needs well. Staff act as role models for pupils in the way they talk, act and behave towards each other and interact with children. You diligently follow up any concerns to ensure vulnerable pupils and their families receive the support they need. Where necessary, this means providing specialist support arranged by the school. Your records are thorough and show your emphasis on ensuring that all concerns are fully resolved. You are rigorous in implementing your agreed safeguarding policies and procedures. The positive culture of keeping all pupils safe is illustrated by pupils' ability to express what it means to say that they feel safe. They reported, 'we can trust teachers to help us out, we are all part of a big family, if you ever have something to get off your chest you can do it, they don't mind giving up their time and helping you ... at any time'.

Inspection findings

- Children start at the school with emotional, social, speech and language skills well below those typical for their age. Your investment in a range of early support to develop children's skills in these areas is working well. Your support for specialist speech and language therapy and the development of precise social skills programmes are helping children's early development. These strategies prepare children well for their learning as they move up through the year groups in the school. However, you are concerned that when you identify children with significant early barriers to learning, prompt action by some external agencies is lacking. Too often you are informed that pupils do not reach the threshold specified by the local authority in order to access the specialist support they need. The time taken to respond to referrals is often too long. You, therefore, do what you can to provide any additional support and ensure that pupils' academic and personal needs are fully met.
- The deputy headteacher, ably supported by other leaders, has worked hard to create a stimulating curriculum which carefully links different areas of learning. All staff teach literacy carefully, using topics and themes to motivate and engage pupils, especially boys. Work in pupils' books and on display around the school confirms that pupils are writing more, writing confidently and making good progress. Pupils' core literacy skills are therefore being developed well in other subjects. Pupils are excited and enthusiastic about this approach. Some activities planned for pupils do not fully extend their understanding of the impact or effect that sentence, word or punctuation choices make on a reader. In addition, well-developed links between the mathematics curriculum and other subjects are yet to be established. Occasionally, pupils' learning falters when the progression between topics is not clear and does not develop pupils' deeper understanding of mathematical concepts.

- The teaching of phonics is effective and permeates through to different aspects of pupils' learning. Teachers watch carefully, listen and check accurately pupils' gains in their knowledge of individual sounds. As a result of the dip in results in the Year 1 phonics check in 2014, you reorganised the curriculum for phonics, provided additional training and strengthened the leadership of early reading. A consistently high-quality approach is now evident. The short time available to fully demonstrate the impact of improvements meant that changes were not reflected in the 2015 results. However, pupils' current progress is rapid and the historical gaps in the achievement of boys and disadvantaged pupils are closing quickly. Just occasionally, teachers do not pick up on learning points to drive home pupils' knowledge of a particular sound.
- The consistency of approach and the developments in the quality of teaching phonics and early reading have improved pupils' learning. However, the same rigour, consistency and systems for reading have yet to be established in Years 3 to 6. Your new assessment system is thorough and detailed, providing clear information for teachers on gains in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. However, it is not yet being used systematically by all teachers in all classes to track pupils' achievement and improvements across all of the different aspects of reading. Consequently, the progress of disadvantaged pupils in 2015 was lower than that of their peers and other pupils nationally. You are aware of this concern and have detailed plans in place to address it.
- Strong, strategic actions by governors have secured improvements in the early years provision. Following disappointing outcomes in 2014, leadership of the early years was strengthened. New staff, a greater rigour and precision in teaching and high-quality training are improving children's achievement. Governors also allocated significant capital investment to improve and expand the quality of the outdoor learning environment. This new resource has been significant in developing boys' physical and coordination skills. You have improved the engagement of boys effectively through the promotion of interesting topics and themes such as 'dinosaurs'. The use of high-quality texts and discussions about interesting topics are enthusing boys and prompting them to read, talk and write about their favourite books.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the rigour and precision of teaching, learning and assessment of reading in Years 3 to 6 match that of the best in the school
- when writing, pupils fully understand how the word, sentence and punctuation choices they make impact on the meaning of the text for the reader
- the mathematics curriculum is developed to meet fully the requirements of the new national curriculum and to enable pupils to use their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding in topics and themes in other subjects.

Yours sincerely

Richard Light

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, staff and pupils. I spoke with a representative of the governing body on the telephone. I accompanied senior leaders on visits to lessons and together we looked at work in pupils' books. I took into account the survey results from Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents. I met with a group of pupils from Years 2 to 6 in order to discuss their work and gain their views of the school. I evaluated the accuracy of your self-evaluation and reviewed a range of other documentation. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding and recruitment arrangements.