

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



27 July 2016

Mrs Julia Bowles
Headteacher
Wenhaston Primary School
Hall Road
Wenhaston
Halesworth
Suffolk
IP19 9EP

Dear Mrs Bowles

Short inspection of Wenhaston Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 July 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 July 2011.

This school continues to be good.

Since the last inspection, the school has suffered a period of turbulence, with a number of acting headteachers over the past year and an almost complete change in teaching staff. During this period, standards at the school declined. You took up your post as headteacher in September 2015. At the same time, three out of the four classes also had new teachers. Quickly identifying that there was much to be done to restore this school to good, you set about making many improvements. You began with improving the physical environment of the school, encouraging parents and others to join you in redecorating classrooms and creating a welcoming and attractive learning environment.

You began by putting together an action plan which clearly set out what needed to be achieved and by when, involving staff and governors in setting out the priorities and how they would be addressed. You made sure that your plan set clear dates for action, and you continue to review your plan and its impact very regularly.

Reaching out to the community, you have ensured that parents know that they are welcome in the school, holding informal coffee mornings to meet with them and chat as well as formal meetings to discuss the curriculum. You have also built good links with the wider community to support learning, such as through the 'Food for thought' project with a local company. In this way, you have re-established an ethos where everyone is working together to ensure that Wenhaston is a school to

be rightly proud of.

You and your new team have improved pupils' behaviour, which had slipped over the previous period. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that behaviour at the school is much improved and there is rarely any poor behaviour, and one pupil said confidently that 'bullying doesn't happen here'. This has come about because you have established very clear expectations of pupils, their conduct and their attitudes. You have insisted, for example, that pupils wear their uniforms smartly and with pride. You have introduced the 'Golden book', which motivates pupils to try hard with their work in order to gain a much-prized mention in the book for their achievements and efforts.

You have ensured that staff understand and recognise what needs to improve and why, and established a shared vision for the school, setting the bar high for staff and pupils. The vast majority of staff welcome this and are highly committed to the school.

Governors are very supportive of the school, some of them also being new to their roles. They recognise that, previously, governors had allowed standards to dip. The new chair of governors, herself a successful ex-headteacher, brings experience and a high level of challenge. She has audited the skills of the governing body, utilising and further developing their skills and expertise so that they are able to hold leaders to account. As a result, they have become much more focused on ensuring that pupil achievement is their key priority. They ask challenging questions about initiatives, such as the 'Big maths', and about the impact of decisions taken.

The local authority, belatedly identifying that the school had declined, has provided strong support for you and your team. For example, it has provided training for your special educational needs leader, carried out a review of assessment in the school and supported improvements in the Reception class.

Safeguarding is effective.

Shortly after you took up your post, the local authority carried out a review of safeguarding and identified weaknesses, predominantly in relation to the security of the school site. You and your governors responded swiftly to the recommendations made and improved the security of the site. You have ensured that rigorous checks on staff are carried out and recorded, and that all statutory requirements are met in respect of keeping children safe. You and your staff carefully document any concerns about a pupil and take robust action where necessary, following up with other agencies such as social services when this is needed. Staff training is kept up to date so that everyone at the school is very aware of what to do to keep children safe.

Inspection findings

- The school has an almost brand new teaching team. You have established

high expectations by setting out your 'fundamentals' and checking that these are adhered to. These include a whole-school approach to marking and feedback, setting up 'working walls' in each classroom, and ensuring that the values discussed in assemblies and displayed on the values tree are used by all teachers to encourage positive attitudes in their classes.

- Teachers know what good teaching is because you model this through your own teaching and you also provide regular opportunities for teachers to visit other schools to learn from their practice. You also provide other opportunities for professional development for teachers, for example attending courses and working with cluster schools.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that teachers expect much more of them now than previously, which they recognise as a good thing. They also said that teachers challenge them regularly, asking questions which make them think hard. This is helping pupils to make much better progress.
- Teachers follow the school's marking and feedback policy, and their comments to pupils about how to improve their work are used by pupils. For example, one pupil was encouraged to use more than one adjective, and in the subsequent piece of work had done just that. Pupils also are given regular opportunities to review and improve their own work, which was an area for improvement identified by the previous inspection. For example, older pupils check their writing against the criteria given to them to see that they have included all the features relevant to that style of writing. They alter their writing using a thesaurus to find and select better word choices which will have more impact.
- The school's approach to teaching phonics has been reviewed and reinvigorated. Pupils are making much better progress and the proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the government's phonic assessment is much higher this year than in 2015.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are being well supported. This is because the leader for special educational needs, who is new to her role, has quickly put in place support for pupils, such as specific programmes to develop speaking and listening and social skills. She carefully tracks the impact of these programmes to ensure that they are proving effective.
- You and your staff analyse the progress of pupils at many levels, looking at the whole class, different groups and individuals. As a result, all staff are very aware of each child's needs and what steps are needed to address these.
- You have put in place mathematics support for individual pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, by employing an experienced teacher, and this is helping pupils to make faster progress in mathematics.
- Your strong focus on ensuring that teaching is strong in English and mathematics has ensured that pupils are making rapid progress in these subjects, as shown in their books and the school's assessment information. However, despite this, some pupils are not reaching the standard expected for their age, because they have gaps in their learning and have not made up the ground lost over the past few years. You also recognise that, while

the quality of writing has improved overall, spelling is weak for some pupils and further work is needed to improve this.

- You have focused your work with staff on ensuring that English and mathematics are taught very effectively and with a consistent approach across the school. You are aware that some subjects, such as art and science, are not taught as well as English and mathematics and you have plans in place to address this next.
- Identifying that, at the end of the Reception Year in 2015, too few children had reached a good level of development by the end of the year, you set about ensuring improvements. You ensured that the Reception class continued to be taught as a single age group. You have improved the learning environment and ensured that equipment provided is high quality, including children's play equipment. You have been supported by local authority advisers in ensuring that activities are engaging and challenging, and this has had a positive impact. For example, during the inspection children were playing outside, some developing their speaking and listening skills by role playing being 'gruffalos' from a favourite story. Meanwhile, others followed a recipe for 'gruffalo crumble' in the mud kitchen, carefully counting spoons of mud as they did so. The Reception teachers carefully record children's achievements in 'learning journeys' which demonstrate clearly the good progress that children are making. As a result of the improvements made, the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development this year is higher than the national average.

Next steps for the school

In order to continue to improve, and therefore avoid any possibility of a decline in the overall outcome at the next inspection, leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- The rapid rate of progress in English and mathematics is maintained so that more pupils attain higher standards.
- Strategies for improving spelling are implemented.
- Teaching of other subjects is improved so that it is as good as in reading, writing and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Maria Curry
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the leader for special educational needs, the teacher responsible for mathematics support and your Reception teachers. I met with two governors and with a small number of Year 4, 5 and 6 pupils. I scrutinised a range of school documents, including information on pupils' progress, safeguarding, school development planning and the school's self-evaluation. I observed teaching in all classes and evaluated pupils' work. I evaluated the school's website and found it to meet requirements on the publication of specified information.