

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



13 September 2016

Miss Frances Dicker
Headteacher
Stamford St Gilbert's CofE Primary School
Foundry Road
Stamford
Lincolnshire
PE9 2PP

Dear Miss Dicker

Short inspection of Stamford St Gilbert's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2011.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You arrived in September 2013 and judged that the quality of teaching was not good enough, and you set about changing this immediately. Your decisive actions mean that teaching is now good in all key stages in the school, and is continuing to improve. Your new deputy headteacher is working closely with you to model best practice to staff and to ensure that there will be no complacency, or any reduction in the pace of change. You have used a wide range of evidence to judge your school correctly as a good and improving one. With the governing body and the staff, you have written an ambitious five-year plan for further development.

You are very clear about your expectations for all staff. You believe that, despite improvements, there are further steps needed. For example, although outcomes in English for younger pupils have risen, teachers have not ensured that pupils in Year 5 have sufficiently secure skills in spelling. As a result, the attainment in writing for these pupils is not as high as it needs to be. In addition, not all teachers in the school insist that pupils set out their work neatly.

You are addressing, or have addressed, a number of priorities. Last year, for example, published information indicated that pupils in Year 6 made significantly less progress in mathematics, compared to other pupils nationally. However, the external adviser that the school has employed for several years explains that, historically, teachers' assessment of pupils in key stage 1 was not consistently

accurate. As a result, the progress that pupils made in key stage 2 was actually better than their results suggested. However, you agree that the quality of mathematics teaching that these pupils received during their time at the school was not consistently good. This was also an important factor in reducing their rate of progress. You have introduced a new commercial scheme for mathematics, with the practical apparatus that pupils need to learn quickly. You have also improved the quality of teaching in the subject. As a result, pupils are making faster progress.

You also noted that, as the result of long-term staffing absences, pupils in Year 1 did not receive effective teaching in phonics (the sound that letters make) last year. As a result, the proportion of pupils passing the phonics screening check fell to less than the national average. You have ensured that staff have dealt with this matter decisively. Highly effective teaching of phonics has been restored, and the proportion of pupils who have passed this year is considerably above the national average, and at its highest-ever pass rate, at 91%. Staff have recently tested those pupils who did not pass the check last year. The pass rate for pupils by the end of Year 2 is also above the national average.

Published information also shows that gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others widened last year. Many of these pupils enter the school with levels of development that are much lower than other pupils. Nevertheless, the rate of progress for disadvantaged pupils is improving. The majority of these pupils, though not all, make good progress from their starting points. You have made further improvements to this area a priority.

Pupils enjoy coming to school to learn, and attendance rates continue to be above the national average. Last year, your monitoring showed that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who staff classified as needing 'support' had a higher rate of absence than similar pupils nationally. You attended to this quickly by intensifying your work with the families whose children attended school less regularly. As a result, the attendance for these pupils has risen and is currently in line with the national average for all pupils.

The large number of staff who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire gave positive views of all aspects of the school. They say that you are leading them well and that St Gilbert's is an aspirational place of learning. Staff also believe that you are considerate of their well-being, and that they feel well supported. High-quality professional development is enabling staff at all levels to develop their skills further. During my visit, for example, I met those who are new to the teaching profession. They explained to me how they feel particularly effectively supported through a highly effective mentoring programme that senior leaders tailor to their needs.

The governing body has improved its effectiveness greatly. Since reducing the governing body in size, and combining a number of its committees, governors have developed a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school, along with what aspects need further development. Governors were able to explain these to me precisely during my visit. Minutes of the governing body meetings confirm that they hold you and senior leaders to account rigorously for pupils' outcomes. They also monitor pupils' safety by, for example, checking risk assessments and ensuring that arrangements for performance management are effective. Governors do not

award pay rises unless teachers meet their targets and their classroom performance merits it.

Parents I met with during my visit, and the very large majority of those who responded to Parent View, gave very positive views of the school, and your leadership. They believe that the school offers a rounded education and that teaching is good. As one parent explained, 'My son is very happy there and skips merrily to school in the morning! I feel he is well looked after and respects his teachers. He has made some excellent progress. The headteacher makes every child feel special and is very visible.' Another added, 'Fantastic staff, a happy and caring atmosphere that also sets high standards in terms of progress and behaviour'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff are very well trained in safeguarding and, as a result, know the different types of abuse. Those who I met with during my visit were able to describe to me, in detail, the many warning signs that might suggest a pupil could be being harmed. When visitors arrive, staff give them a valuable written summary on safeguarding procedures. In addition, they are presented with a useful card with both the names, and photographs, of the designated lead members of staff for safeguarding. This means that any visitor can quickly report any concerns they have, and know what to do if a child makes a disclosure to them.

During my visit, I examined a selection of records for potentially vulnerable pupils. These show that you do not hesitate to make referrals to external agencies, such as social care, whenever this is needed. You work well with parents and always seek their consent, unless this would increase the risk of harm to a child.

Pupils who responded to the pupil questionnaire say that they feel safe in school. Pupils I met with during my visit explained that bullying and name-calling are rare and, if they ever happen, staff deal with it quickly and fairly. Pupils told me that, if they are worried about anything, they could approach any member of staff to help them. These pupils also showed a very good understanding of risks to their safety, in particular regarding the internet and mobile technology.

Inspection findings

- You have created a school where expectations are high and outcomes across the school are improving.
- Subject leaders for English and mathematics are effective. They visit classrooms to check on the quality of teaching, examine pupils' work and lead staff meetings to help other staff improve. They then report their findings to you, senior leaders and governors.
- Procedures for the appraisal of teachers are effective. You ensure that you set ambitious and precise targets for them, and expect much greater responsibility and effectiveness from those who are on the upper pay spine.

- Pupils enter the school with levels of development that are typical, when compared to children of the same age. They make good progress in the Reception class, with consistently higher proportions achieving a good level of development.
- Information provided by the school, and confirmed in an extensive scrutiny of work from different year groups, shows that pupils make good progress through key stages 1 and 2. The rate of progress is improving.
- Achievement by the end of Year 6 is broadly in line with, or better than, national averages. A higher proportion of this year's cohort has achieved the standard expected of them in reading.
- Teaching is good in all key stages of the school. Children get off to a strong start in the Reception Year. During my visit, I saw children improving their skills quickly, learning to write 'The mud is in the pit.', with correct spelling, finger spacing and punctuation. Other children, in the outdoor area, were cooperating happily and improving their catching skills with a ball, or measuring their heights with metre sticks and recording their results on the wall. Children then measured the height of their teaching assistant by putting two metre sticks together before converting 1 metre 64 centimetres into 164 cm.
- Good teaching is evident in key stages 1 and 2. For example, I saw pupils in Year 2 calculating two-digit equations accurately. A pupil I met had discovered that $8+10=21-3$, and could explain clearly why this is so. Pupils in a mixed Year 5 and Year 6 class were performing a drama exercise based on their responses to 'Dulce et Decorum Est', Wilfred Owen's poem about the First World War, with great skill. Pupils were very articulate, explaining precisely the impact of the metaphors the author had chosen.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' progress is accurate, and is becoming increasingly precise. Teachers know what pupils can do, and plan learning which is well suited to their needs. Pupils I met during my visit told me how teachers give them targets and good feedback, which helps them to remember what they need to practise and learn next.
- Caring and capable teaching assistants give pupils who need additional support to catch up effective help to do so. Pupils I met said that they find this very helpful.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, and around the school. They concentrate on their work and listen to what adults are teaching them. They work well together and move about the school calmly and sensibly. There is a very friendly atmosphere at lunchtime, where pupils eat and chat together happily in the dining room.
- Pupils I met say that they like their lessons, and feel that their staff want to hear their thoughts and ideas. For example, a special section of the school's website is written by pupils themselves, with pages giving details about the school's 'Youth University', and providing help for their classmates regarding homework.

- Leaders have spent the primary physical education (PE) and sports funding well. Pupils enthusiastically take part in a great many sporting competitions with other schools. A well-stocked trophy cabinet shows that staff are developing pupils' skills in sports well. Pupils I met were very enthusiastic about the opportunities staff provide to take part in physical exercise, and were proud of their achievements and their peers.
- The school's website meets requirements on the publication of specified information that are specified in its funding agreement. The website contains a wide variety of useful information for parents.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all pupils have secure skills in spelling
- all teachers insist that pupils set out their work neatly and correctly
- the remaining gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others close as quickly as possible.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, representatives of the governing body and the subject leaders for English, mathematics and the early years. We visited classes in all key stages of the school to observe teaching and learning. I looked at an extensive sample of pupils' work from different year groups. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and met with groups of them at breaktime. I received a small number of letters from parents and met with one parent during my visit. I considered the views of 111 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and met a group of parents at the start of the school day. I read a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, your school development plan and information on outcomes for pupils currently in the school. I studied information related to attendance, anonymised examples of teachers' appraisals and examined safeguarding records and policies. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information set out in the school's funding agreement. I looked at the range of views expressed by staff and pupils, through Ofsted's questionnaire, about the school.