

13 October 2016

Mr John Quinn
Headteacher
Watchfield Primary School
North Street
Watchfield
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Dear Mr Quinn

Short inspection of Watchfield Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 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 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 of your predecessor school. You and your leaders have successfully developed teaching. This has led to improvements in pupils' achievement in most subjects and year groups. However, pupils do not achieve as well in phonics as they do in other subjects. While recognising that some pupils have low starting points due to your school's context, you are determined that they do better in phonics. As a result, you have made some significant changes to the way phonics is taught. You are now rigorously checking the impact of these changes and identifying the aspects that require further development.

Since joining the school as headteacher two years ago, you have created a culture that prizes learning. Staff and pupils relish the opportunities for self-development provided within the school. Teachers effectively review their own practice, making good use of the latest educational research. You have developed pupils' ability to identify and employ the learning approaches that work best for them. Consequently, they embark upon the work that teachers set with confidence and zest. Pupils are justly proud of the way the school enhances their capacity for learning and broadens their intellectual horizons.

This is an outward-looking school. You and your leaders have collaborated effectively with partners in the Faringdon Academy of schools (the multi-

academy trust to which you belong) to the benefit of your pupils. A recent example is the way leaders have harnessed their collective expertise to develop a school-wide approach to assessment. The school's location next to the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom means that a significant number of pupils hail from abroad and most pupils are from service families. Pupils' high level of mobility affects your published data. Nevertheless, in 2015 the proportions of pupils making expected and greater than expected progress were mostly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally were minimal. The focus you place on ensuring that no group is left behind meant that in 2015, less able disadvantaged pupils did better than other pupils with the same starting points in mathematics and writing.

You have fully embraced the requirements of the new curriculum and have a well-placed confidence in the accuracy of your assessments. This is because of the checks you make in conjunction with other schools in the trust. Performance data for pupils who left in 2016 is unvalidated. It indicates that pupils' attainment in the now more challenging key stage 2 tests was broadly in line with national expectations in reading and mathematics but slightly below in writing. However, pupils' progress from their starting points in writing was above average. In 2016, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception increased significantly. However, the proportion reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics reading check in 2016 was well below national average. You have analysed this carefully and have made changes to the way phonics is taught.

You have successfully developed phase leaders, all of whom were new to their roles in 2014. They drive forward improvements, working well as a team within school and with other leaders across the trust. Consequently, improvements recommended in the report of your predecessor school have been fully implemented. In particular, mathematics teaching has improved and pupils now have well thought-out opportunities to apply their skills. Teachers make better use of their assessment of pupils' progress when planning learning, as do leaders when they evaluate the impact of changes.

Phase leaders have successfully ensured that agreed approaches to assessing without levels work well. Consequently, teachers set tasks that are demanding and open ended enough for pupils to demonstrate mastery. They closely track each pupil's learning and progress. You have robust evidence that pupils are making strong progress from their starting points. In particular, pupils who are falling behind are well supported. A strength is the additional help that the school provides for pupils who arrive with very little confidence in English. This support is specialised and rapidly enables pupils to access the level of language they need to participate fully in class learning. However, you astutely recognise that pupils for whom English is an additional language have the capacity to make rapid progress. You have set challenging targets for them, as you do for all pupils. You have analysed assessment information and identified that some pupils who live permanently in the local

community need additional support. You are providing this through a variety of well-researched approaches.

Governance is effective because governors know the school well through planned visits and other monitoring activities. They keep a very careful watch over how well pupils are doing. Governors are clear that as members of the local governing body, they are responsible for holding you and other leaders to account. The trust's directors effectively support the local governing body in maintaining their sharp focus on the quality of pupils' education. For example, governors insist that phase and subject leaders provide regular reports for the individual governors to whom they are linked. Governors use these reports effectively to identify areas for further development. The governing body has strong and well-established links with the Defence Academy, including recruiting a senior welfare officer onto the governing body. This supports the school in its work to engage parents, the vast majority of whom are military personnel.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Designated leaders and the newly appointed family support worker liaise with parents well, including those from abroad. They ensure that parents fully understand the school-wide and government safeguarding guidance to which the school adheres. Of note is how closely you work with welfare personnel at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom to ensure that any issues are passed on to the appropriate bodies.

Parents value the support you provide for pupils, commenting: 'The teachers are very approachable and I feel confident that if there were any problems they would be dealt with quickly'. Parents appreciate how welcome you make them and their youngsters feel. You ensure that all pupils access the information they need to stay safe when online. Older pupils see themselves as playing a key role in ensuring that younger pupils are safe and happy.

Inspection findings

- The local governing body makes a significant contribution to improving the school. In particular, governors ensure that written reports based on their one-to-one-meetings with phase leaders are clear. Governors' evaluations are closely linked to the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' outcomes. They have sensibly identified phonics as a key area for development.
- Governors keep a sharp focus on safeguarding. They use their close links with senior personnel at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom to ensure that any important issues regarding service children are passed on appropriately.
- Leaders work effectively with partner schools in the trust, often taking the lead on trust-wide projects. Teachers' assessments have been verified by

their trust partners, who rigorously check their accuracy. As a result, in 2016, teachers' own assessments and external key stage test scores were well matched.

- The headteacher has successfully developed phase leaders. They have accessed training from within the trust, and beyond. The headteacher has high expectations of them. Consequently, phase leaders drive forward improvements effectively. However, actions taken to improve phonics are not yet as effective as changes made in other subjects and year groups. The headteacher is prioritising phonics for future development.
- Phase leaders successfully ensure that new approaches to assessment and changes to the curriculum are fully understood by teachers, assistants, pupils and parents. Consequently, class teachers are clear about how to apply the special criteria for awarding pupils a 'mastery score'. This is applied consistently across the school.
- Teachers have successfully implemented the deeper levels of challenge in mathematics, which require pupils to apply their learning in working out complex problems. These 'chilli challenges' are graduated and pupils choose their own level of challenge. This approach has supported all pupils, especially the most able who have thrived on the opportunity to put their expertise in mathematical reasoning to the test.
- Pupils are well attuned to their preferred way of learning and can accurately gauge their capacity for new learning. As a result, pupils know the processes that they need to go through to choose the right level of 'chilli challenge'.
- Areas for development in the previous inspection report for the predecessor school have been effectively tackled. As a result, in 2015 the proportion of pupils making expected and greater than expected progress in mathematics was well above average.
- The needs of all pupils are well met. Support for the high number of pupils who join the school late is tailor-made. In 2016, unvalidated data shows that pupils achieved broadly in line with average in key stage 2 tests in reading, writing, and mathematics and similarly well in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test.
- Support for pupils who are not confident in using English is planned carefully and delivered well. It helps pupils in making progress because they are required to use subject-specific vocabulary and practise how to pronounce and spell key words.
- Phase leaders keep a watchful eye on the progress of different groups, including disadvantaged pupils. They check carefully to ensure that any additional support has a tangible impact on pupils' outcomes. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils' progress was at least in line with other pupils' nationally in 2015 key stage 2 tests and assessments. Broadly speaking, in 2015, disadvantaged pupils with high starting points made at least as much progress as others with similar starting points.
- The 2016 published data for disadvantaged pupils' progress compared with national averages is not yet available. However, the school's own information shows that this small group within the school make at least the same strong progress as their peers.

- Evidence of pupils' writing in books shows that they are challenged by writing at length in a range of genres. They are provided with real-life audiences for their writing, which successfully act as an impetus for pupils to sharpen their craft.
- Most-able pupils read a range of books enthusiastically and well. They are able to explain why they chose the book, explore how the story relates to their own lives and others' and predict what may happen next. Most-able readers access books that are broadly commensurate with their abilities, such as 'The hobbit'. Following a recent refurbishment, the library is still being built up. The plans in place for it are very well developed and include the provision of challenging texts.
- The early years leader has made substantial improvements to the setting. These include ensuring that play activities provide opportunities for children to develop literacy and numeracy skills. Children now achieve better in the early years learning goals. In 2016, there was significant improvement in the percentage reaching a good level of development compared with 2015.
- Pupils are able to explain what makes their school so special and how much they benefit from the international ethos. Their understanding of fundamental British values is nuanced. Pupils from abroad recognise the way British values are echoed in the principles they cherish. This reflects how effectively the school has promoted British values through the curriculum, and through well-planned extra-curricular activities.
- Parents' responses on Parent View and their comments online about the school were overwhelmingly positive. Comments such as: 'We are delighted with how happily our daughter has settled into this school. She is enthusiastic to attend each morning and comes home keen to share what she has done during the day', were typical.
- Leaders are currently rigorously checking the impact of recent changes to phonics. Consequently, further changes are planned. Leaders have scrutinised assessment information from 2015 and 2016. It is important to recognise the complex picture of pupils' starting points, a significant number of whom join the school in Year 1 unable to speak English. However, the school is rightly focusing on ensuring that all pupils make rapid progress from their starting points.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- additional changes planned to improve phonics teaching are fully implemented and rigorously evaluated, so outcomes in phonics improve.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chair of the board of directors of the Faringdon Academy of Schools, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I agreed the key areas for this inspection with you and the deputy headteacher during our initial meeting. These included investigating improvements in phonics and the early years and the impact of phase leaders in developing teaching. Key lines of enquiry were focused on how well the school ensures that middle ability pupils, disadvantaged pupils, pupils for whom English is an additional language, and the most able make the progress of which they are capable. Another important focus related to the impact of the local governing body.

I met with subject and year group leaders, who conducted a scrutiny of pupils' books and then discussed their findings with me. I also met with the chair of the local governing body, accompanied by three other governors and separately with year group leaders to discuss outcomes. I listened to a group of pupils read and talked with them about the school. Short visits were made to a number of lessons, most accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team, to observe teaching and look at work in pupils' books. I observed pupils' behaviour in a range of situations, including in lessons and around the school. The 66 responses of parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 26 comments that parents made on free text were considered. I also considered 35 responses to the staff questionnaire and 33 replies to the pupil survey. I analysed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the latest improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, and safeguarding documentation.