

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Shirley Clarke and Mrs Claire Savory
Co-headteachers
Springbank Primary Academy
Springbank Road
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL51 0PH

Dear Mrs Clarke and Mrs Savory

Short inspection of Springbank 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 school was judged to be good in June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

- Springbank Primary Academy's vision – Effort, Participation, Improvement and Celebration – permeates the work of the school. Under your joint leadership, the school has continued to grow, develop and flourish.
- You both share an uncompromising drive towards excellence and have successfully tackled the areas that were identified as needing further improvement at the time of the last inspection. For example, you have both worked successfully with your staff to develop and improve teaching.
- You and your leadership team are not complacent. Initiatives to support pupils' ability to write at length about different topics are successfully improving their writing skills. Nevertheless, you and other school leaders, including the governors, are fully aware that more work needs to be done so that pupils are confident in applying their understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar to new or unfamiliar contexts. You are taking appropriate steps to improve this aspect of the school's work.
- The governing body provides high-quality support and rigorous challenge. Members meticulously check behaviour and incident logs and, if there are any dips in pupils' outcomes, they seek explanation and a rapid remedy.

- Partnerships between home and school have strengthened considerably since the last inspection because you have adopted innovative ways to engage parents in their children's education.
- You and your teachers have planned a curriculum which is well balanced and provides excitement, challenge and creativity. Pupils are very much involved in what they learn and how to do this and work well on their own or with a partner.
- A significant strength of the school is the skilful way in which you successfully develop competent and talented senior and middle leaders. At the same time, you share your work wider with other local schools and provide them with the support they need to improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding with a shared understanding of the need to protect pupils against all possible risks. Staff know the children and families well and keep a close eye on every pupil, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and accurate. Policies and procedures are kept up to date and are firmly adhered to. For example, staff have already been briefed on recent safeguarding updates. All staff are well trained to spot concerns and know they must report them promptly. Given that you work as co-headteachers and are sometimes out supporting other schools, several other senior leaders have also been trained as designated safeguarding leads. This ensures that there is always someone on site to whom staff can immediately report concerns.

You make effective use of your safeguarding governor's professional expertise to ensure that your pupils are kept safe. You and your governors fully understand how to recruit safely and ensure that all staff are carefully vetted prior to employment. Governors regularly carry out health and safety checks to make sure that the school is a safe place to be for all members of the community. All staff and governors have undertaken training on the prevention of extremism and radicalisation in schools and incorporate this into their safeguarding practice.

The pupils I spoke to during my visit all said that they feel safe. They know that adults in school will help them if they have a worry or concern. Pupils gave me an example by describing an antisocial incident which happened last year and explained to me that it had been dealt with both promptly and appropriately. They also made it clear that they have a secure knowledge of the importance of e-safety and what constitutes sensible and safe use of social media.

Inspection findings

- Pivotal to the school's improvement is the relentless focus you and your

leadership team have in making sure that all teachers have the highest expectations for their pupils. As leaders you hold teachers to account through an impressive performance management structure which drives school improvement well. A consistent approach to teaching is successfully achieved by evaluating the individual performance of each teacher against these agreed expectations. Consequently, teaching is securely good.

- In the most recent national test results, you were able to demonstrate that your most-able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, achieved as well as their peers nationally and made good progress. This is because teachers challenge them to deepen and share their understanding. Alongside this work, you use pupil premium funds well to provide opportunities to enrich pupils' learning and experiences. For example, the most able disadvantaged pupils recently attended the Cheltenham Science Festival, where they explored the physical and chemical elements of chocolate and then presented their findings to the rest of the school.
- Pupils are making good progress in using and applying their skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar well and explain how they use them in their writing. However, they lack confidence to transfer these skills to new or unfamiliar contexts. This remains a focus of your work following the disappointing results in this area in the most recent national tests.
- Pupils read widely and enjoy talking about their favourite authors. They read out mathematical and scientific problems and confidently tackle non-fiction books. An effective balance between giving pupils time to read on their own and work with partners on shared texts develops their understanding of what is written. However, I noted that they did not always make full use of the punctuation in texts when reading aloud.
- Most children start school with poorly developed skills in listening, speaking and counting. They progress well in the early years Reception class because they are given bespoke opportunities to develop these skills. For example, a high proportion of the current Year 2 pupils started school initially lacking the personal and social skills they needed to learn in school. You successfully trained teaching staff to tackle their specific speech and language difficulties, developed further play-based activities and worked closely with parents.
- Although the level of development of disadvantaged children, particularly boys, fell short of national averages at the end of their Reception Year in 2015, these pupils have continued to make rapid progress given their low starting points. Consequently, in the most recent Year 1 phonics checks a good proportion of this cohort attained the expected level. Year 1 standards in phonics are improving year on year.
- Pupils have very positive and determined attitudes to their learning. They all strive to be 'experts' and choose the most challenging activities to work on.
- Governors assiduously check that resources are deployed well and additional funding, such as pupil premium and sports funding, is spent effectively.
- The impact of the work of the specialist team which liaises with parents

and carers, supports the children's personal, social, emotional and health issues very well.

- The views of the small proportion of parents who responded to Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire, support the overwhelming positive responses that the school receives from the surveys it carries out. You have developed imaginative ways to get parents more involved in the school and support their children with learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Pupils develop more confidence when using their punctuation, grammar and spelling skills in test situations and when reading aloud in class or to an adult.

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

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Since the last inspection the school has become part of the Gloucestershire Learning Alliance, which is a multi-academy trust.

I met with both of you and we discussed the school's self-evaluation, information about the progress pupils were making and improvements since the last inspection. I also held discussions with other senior and middle leaders and a governor. We visited all the classes. We looked at the books from Year 6 pupils who left in 2016 and some from the current Year 6 class. We also looked at a range of books from all year groups. I listened to some pupils read during their class activities. I also heard a group of six pupils read out of class and talked to them about school life. I looked at the survey results from the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the comments that had been placed on this website by some parents.

The key lines of enquiry tested on the short inspection day were:

- the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils at the end of Reception and in the Year 1 phonics check
- the differences between the expected standards reached in the 2016 Year 6 writing tests and the punctuation, grammar and spelling test outcomes

- the successful outcomes of the most able pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged
- improvements in partnership work between home and school since the last inspection
- how effectively the school keeps pupils safe.