

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Jackie Harris
Headteacher
Matchborough First School Academy
Matchborough Way
Matchborough East
Redditch
Worcestershire
B98 0GD

Dear Jackie Harris

Short inspection of Matchborough First School Academy

Following my visit to the school on 4 October 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 January 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 promote a 'no excuses' culture and ensure that all pupils, regardless of any barriers to their learning, become well-rounded individuals and achieve well by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4. Pupils are kind and respectful towards each other and adults. They speak with pride about their school. The pupils I spoke with described staff as 'caring' and lessons as 'fun'.

'A great school which has nurtured my daughter's progress in learning and confidence,' wrote one parent on the Ofsted online questionnaire. This echoed the view shared by the vast majority of parents who spoke with me during the inspection and completed the questionnaire. Senior leaders, staff and governors have created a culture where pupils, parents and visitors are made to feel welcome. They work well as a team and are constantly striving to improve the life chances of every pupil who enters the school gates.

Following the previous inspection, leaders and governors were asked to raise standards of writing at the end of key stage 1. You and the staff took appropriate steps in response to this. In 2015, standards in writing were well above the national average. Leaders and governors were also asked to make sure that staff made better use of information about pupils' achievement when marking pupils' work and planning activities. I found that teachers adhere to the school's policy when they check pupils' work and that pupils receive the advice they need to improve their

work. During my brief visits to lessons, I found that most teachers usually plan activities that are well matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities.

Senior leaders have correctly recognised that further work is required to help the youngest pupils in key stage 1 to reach even higher standards. You acknowledge that the way in which you and the assistant headteachers collate information about pupils' achievement is cumbersome. Senior leaders are planning to change the way in which information about individual pupils and different groups of pupils is collected and analysed. The school website contains a range of useful information. However, this information is not always easy for parents to locate.

Safeguarding is effective.

The pupils I spoke with confirm that they feel safe at school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and whom they can talk to if they have any concerns. The school has appropriate measures in place to ensure that pupils can use the internet safely. Pupils told me that as an extra measure, they can use the 'Hector the dolphin' alert on the school's computers to let an adult know if unsuitable content was ever to pop up while using internet search engines. In the playground, pupils use a range of equipment safely and are considerate of others while running around during team games. The adults in the playground and the pupil play leaders encourage pupils to cooperate. This positive interaction leads to a playground that is calm and harmonious.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Senior leaders keep a close check on pupils' welfare and work well with external agencies to keep pupils safe. The school's family support worker plays a particularly strong role in ensuring that any pupil identified as potentially at risk receives immediate support.

Inspection findings

- You and the assistant headteachers have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and where further improvements are required. Staff and governors share your vision for the school. Through their daily practice, staff make every effort to meet the differing learning needs of the pupils and to make learning experiences enjoyable. This helps pupils, including those in the speech and language resource base, to make good progress over time.
- The members of the governing body use their expertise well to provide school leaders with valuable support and guidance. Through regular meetings and visits to the school they keep themselves well informed about the school's work. However, the information they receive about pupils' achievement is not concisely presented. This prevents them from checking the impact of school leaders' actions on different groups of pupils in the school.
- Last year, the school experienced some significant changes with staffing. This had a detrimental impact on some pupils in the school. The provisional results of the 2016 teacher assessments show that the majority of pupils in Year 2 did not reach the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.

Together with the staff, you acted swiftly in response to this. The pupils who were in Year 2 last year are now benefiting from additional support and being taught in small groups. My review of the work in their books shows that they are catching up quickly and making up for lost ground.

- In 2016, almost half of the children in the early years did not reach a good level of development. The school's information shows that this was particularly due to weaknesses in children's writing. In response to this, staff have completely overhauled the way that children are taught so that there is greater focus on developing children's writing, reading and mathematical skills through different activities. This is having a beneficial impact, with children now making good gains with their understanding of numbers, letters and sounds, and words.
- Senior leaders meet regularly with staff to discuss the progress of disadvantaged pupils and the exact actions that will be taken to help them make good progress. Your latest information about pupils' achievement and work in pupils' books shows that disadvantaged pupils in most year groups, including in the early years, are achieving well. This information also shows that gaps between disadvantaged pupils in the school and pupils nationally are diminishing. Nevertheless, you recognise that on occasions some of the youngest pupils in key stage 1, including those who are disadvantaged, do not consistently make the progress they should. Your plans to help the youngest pupils in key stage 1 reach even higher standards are appropriate.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. The pupil ambassadors welcome visitors with a smile and explain what they are learning. Teachers and teaching assistants use questions well to challenge and extend pupils, and particularly those who are most-able. A group of most-able pupils in Year 3, for instance, were thoroughly enjoying using their knowledge of addition to solve a range of suitably challenging questions. They told me that they like to complete the 'awesome' tasks because they want to impress their teacher. The mathematics leader is intending to work with all staff to ensure that pupils have even more opportunities to develop their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- The overall attendance of pupils remains similar to the national average for primary schools. Last year, staff correctly identified that some disadvantaged pupils and some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were not attending school regularly. Together with staff, you worked well with families to highlight the importance of coming to school every day. Your latest information shows that the attendance of these individual pupils has improved and is closer to the national average than previously.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who spoke with me and who completed the Ofsted online questionnaire were positive about the school. A few raised a number of concerns, including a lack of communication. Staff use a variety of methods, such as regular newsletter to keep parents well informed. Staff also make sure that they are available to speak with parents about individual concerns. The school website, however, is not well organised. For example, it contains different versions of some school policies and it is difficult to locate the most up to date information.
- Parents are invited to take part in various school events. 'Plant a plant day', for example, encourages pupils and parents to work together to keep the school

grounds blooming all year round. Similarly, fathers and their children have the chance to enjoy a weekend of 'glamping' on the school's grounds and take part in a range of outdoor activities.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the youngest pupils in key stage 1, including the disadvantaged pupils, make even faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- information about pupils' achievement is presented in a way that enables governors to check the impact of leaders' actions on different groups of pupils
- the information on the school website is organised coherently so that it provides parents with the most up-to-date information.

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

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the assistant headteachers, the family support worker and the member of staff who oversees pupils' attendance. I had a telephone conversation with the vice-chair of the governing body and I met with another governor. You joined me on brief visits to lessons. We talked to pupils about their learning and looked at examples of pupils' work. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and pupils throughout the day. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's own evaluation of its performance, documents related to keeping pupils safe and the most recent information about pupils' achievement. This inspection focused particularly on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils; achievement in the early years; the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; the information available for parents on the school website and the actions taken by leaders in response to the recommendations from the previous inspection.