

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



1 November 2016

Mr Graham Cullen
Headteacher
Porchester Junior School
Standhill Road
Carlton
Nottingham
Nottinghamshire
NG4 1LF

Dear Mr Cullen

Short inspection of Porchester Junior School

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 the 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. The school thrives under your leadership and direction. You have developed an exciting learning culture where all pupils are expected to make at least good progress over time. Staff, governors, parents and pupils are all proud to belong to this school community. All staff convey a strong sense of mutual responsibility.

You and your deputy headteacher have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the areas needing further work. As a result of your precise and timely plans, actions are already being taken to bring about the necessary improvements.

Teachers' high expectations of pupils' outcomes ensure that pupils achieve consistently well throughout the school. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 spoke positively about the quality of the teaching that they receive. They said that learning is interesting because teachers make it fun.

Teachers give pupils a good understanding of how successfully they have completed their work, and provide a clear idea of what they need to do next in order to improve. Occasionally, however, this is not always as precise as required by the school's assessment policy for pupils' knowledge to be deepened further. Pupils, especially the most able, said they are challenged to do harder work, but that sometimes it could be provided more quickly or could be even harder.

You have created a broad and interesting curriculum. Pupils learn about many different subjects. They also attend a variety of extra-curricular learning activities, which they enjoy. Links with other providers help pupils to experience additional learning, such as by studying a second language. Pupils do say, however, that they would like more after-school and lunchtime clubs which are not sport based. The recently introduced 'values based education' programme is already having a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values.

Your middle leaders ensure that pupils follow the school's curriculum and that resources are made available for this to happen. However, the middle leaders are not yet fully accountable for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the subject areas they lead. For example, middle leaders do not rigorously check whether teaching is making a difference to the progress that the most able pupils make.

The pupils are extremely well behaved. They are considerate, well mannered and welcoming to visitors. Pupils talk confidently, listen to, and value, each other's ideas. Children like being pupils at your school.

Where you have identified dips in pupils' performance you have acted quickly to address them. This has led to significant improvements in pupils' achievement over time. For example, a previous dip in Year 6 pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling attainment led to concerted and effective action to ensure that pupils now consistently achieve highly in this area. Pupils' attainment in reading, in 2016, dropped to average and this has also led to changes being made in how this subject is being taught.

The areas for improvement identified during the school's previous inspection have been tackled effectively. By sharpening your school improvement planning and raising the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, you have improved the outcomes for pupils. The rate of progress that pupils make, and the number of pupils reaching nationally expected levels at the end of key stage 2, have both increased. This success demonstrates the impact of good leadership and the school's capacity for improvement in the future.

You are not complacent about your successes and recognise that there is still work to be done to ensure that the most able pupils achieve highly. You have also identified the further development of your middle leaders as a priority, to ensure they have the skills and capacity for the roles they carry out.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a strong ethos of safeguarding. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are meticulously maintained. Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are overseen by a governor, who is experienced and knowledgeable. Staff are kept up

to date about safeguarding issues. All staff have a clear understanding of the potential risks and know how to deal with any concerns.

Pupils are kept safe and supported effectively through a strong working relationship between the school, external agencies and the local authority. Referrals are made in a timely manner and concerns followed up appropriately. Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe at the school. They know there is always someone they can talk with and are confident that they are listened to. The school's curriculum helps pupils to develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. Pupils are adamant that incidents of bullying are extremely rare in their school.

Inspection findings

- The school improvement plan has a clear set of actions, identified from the school's self-evaluation. You report to governors regularly about the progress being made, using measurable success criteria. Governors therefore have a sound grasp of the key priorities for the school and use this to monitor the difference the actions taken by senior leaders are making.
- Middle leaders use a range of evidence to determine the quality of teaching in their area, including the checking of pupils' work in books and the oversight of teachers' planning. However, there is more to be done to ensure that they take a more active role in checking the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, so that they can be held accountable for outcomes in their subject areas and contribute to addressing some relative shortcomings in the achievement of the most able pupils.
- Pupils' outcomes overall are good. The proportion of pupils reaching age-related attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is similar to national averages. Some pupils attain standards which are above average. Pupils also make good progress from their different starting points. Senior leaders focus their attention on raising achievement when it dips. They track the progress of pupils rigorously and have a detailed understanding of how well individual pupils are learning over time. This enables leaders to ensure that pupils receive any additional support they may need in order to make good progress. However, senior leaders have highlighted the need to do further work on the school's progress tracking system, to support the most able pupils better, now that they have a better understanding of the new national measures.
- You evaluate effectively the performance of different groups of pupils, such as those supported through the pupil premium, to measure the impact of the extra support they receive. The differences in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in the school and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally have diminished. Lower-attaining pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points.
- You acknowledge, however, that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, do not progress as rapidly as other groups in

the school. You now have a sharper focus on this group of pupils. This is already having an impact on pupils currently in the school, especially in Year 4 and Year 5.

- Teachers plan learning activities which capture pupils' interest. Pupils listen respectfully to staff and work well, both independently and together. They present their work neatly. However, sometimes more demanding work is not provided quickly enough to help pupils make faster progress. Pupils' books I looked at during the inspection confirm this. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well through effective guidance from teaching assistants and adapted resources. They pay close attention to teachers and teaching assistants, and learn quickly.
- This year, leaders noted a small dip in attainment in reading. The readers I listened to, across a range of different abilities, were fluent and confident. They said that they enjoyed reading, and did so often. Leaders have analysed the particular areas in reading that were not understood as well by pupils last year and are tackling them head on.
- Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum that engages them and contributes to their enjoyment of learning. They develop appropriate skills across a range of different subjects. When I asked pupils which subjects were their favourites, all subjects were mentioned.
- The school is an extremely bright and welcoming place. Displays are informative, well maintained and respected. In each of the classes I visited, behaviour was characterised by positive attitudes and respectful relationships. The pupils I spoke with were articulate, confident and polite. They are very proud of their school and clearly enjoy and appreciate the provision you and your staff make for them.
- You have taken swift action to improve pupils' attendance at the school. Procedures to track and support those pupils with poorer attendance have been improved. Attendance overall and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent are now similar to national figures. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils continues to improve and, for pupils currently in the school, is average. No pupils have been excluded from the school for the last two years.
- From the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own parental surveys, it is evident that the vast majority of parents and carers value all aspects of the school's work.
- The school does not meet the requirements on the publication of information on its website. Leaders and governors must ensure that they fulfil their statutory duties, set out by the government, with regard to information about the rationale for spending the pupil premium funding and the barriers to learning that Porchester pupils face. The impact made as a result of the sport premium funding must also be included.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make even better progress by moving them on to harder work more quickly
- middle leaders' skills are developed so that they can be held accountable for improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their subject areas
- the school meets the requirements on the publication of information on its website.

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

Yours sincerely

Vondra Mays
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders and representatives of the governing body. You and I made a series of visits to lessons. I listened to pupils read and held a discussion with a group of pupils. In addition, I considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, records relating to pupils' attendance and exclusions and information on outcomes for pupils. Safeguarding practices were also reviewed. I examined the school's website to check that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information. I also considered the views of 22 parents posted on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 13 free text responses, as well as the school's own parental survey.

This short inspection focused on whether:

- all pupils had access to a broad and balanced programme of learning
- the most able pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, were being sufficiently challenged to achieve highly
- the less able pupils, and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, were continuing to make good progress
- attendance and persistent absence in the school were improving
- safeguarding was still effective across the school and pupils are kept safe.