

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
<http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>



30 November 2016

Mrs Lara Jeffries
Acting Headteacher
The Willows CofE Primary School
The Willows North
Stratford-upon-Avon
Warwickshire
CV37 9QN

Dear Mrs Jeffries

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Willows CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 08 November 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- clearly state who is monitoring and evaluating each action on improvement plans, enabling leaders and managers to measure progress more thoroughly
- closely monitor and improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders and the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. The school's

post-inspection action and improvement plans were evaluated and discussed during the day. The school's latest assessment records, safeguarding information and recent external reports about the school's progress were scrutinised. I conducted a learning walk across five classrooms with you and the deputy headteacher, where pupils' workbooks were sampled. Informal discussions were held with pupils and parents.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has retired and one of the deputy headteachers is currently the acting headteacher. One new teacher and two new teaching assistants started in September 2016. A new headteacher has been externally appointed to start in January 2017. Five new governors and a new chair of the governing body have been appointed.

Main findings

You have capably led rapid improvements to the school's drive, efficiency and response to the previous inspection report. In addition, you have provided stable leadership during a period of a number of changes at the school. Leaders work together well and have put robust plans in place, focused on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. However, the school's improvement plans do not clearly define who is monitoring and evaluating each action. Parents, staff and pupils support the developments you have made since September. For example, parents value the more open approach and being provided with more information about any changes. Leaders have an honest and realistic view of both the progress the school has made so far and the improvements which are still required.

Senior leaders have focused on improving teaching, especially in mathematics, raising teachers' expectations of pupils and the use of assessment information. The most recent published information on pupils' outcomes indicates that the increased focus on mathematics has been successful, especially by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6. Teachers have increased their expectations of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in particular. The school's most recent assessment information has been thoroughly analysed and indicates that pupils are typically progressing well. Leaders have also used this information effectively to analyse which groups are not making as much progress, and to adjust the support in place. For example, progress in writing is typically lower than that in reading and mathematics, especially for pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding (disadvantaged pupils). Leaders have put appropriate measures in place to further support this group's progress in writing. The school's approach to marking pupils' work and providing effective feedback is still being refined to have the greatest impact on pupils' progress.

Following weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, a thorough review of governance was completed by an external consultant in December 2015. Governors have started to act on the recommendations identified as part of this review and are able to demonstrate impact by carefully recording the actions they take. The governing body has reconstituted since the last inspection and appointed a new chair person. Evidence indicates that the governing body is now acting more strategically. Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and accept that there is still more work to do to, such as increasingly holding leaders to account for improving the school's effectiveness.

Staff morale and teamwork have been improved and, as a result, teachers and teaching assistants have embraced the changes leaders have introduced, such as a greater use and transparency of assessment information. Leaders have increased the focus on social and emotional aspects of the curriculum and ethos of the school. Consequently, individual support for vulnerable pupils has improved and staff absence has decreased.

Leaders are pleased with the 2016 Year 6 results, which showed that pupils' attainment and progress were well above the national average in reading and in line with the national average in mathematics and writing. The 2016 key stage 1 progress measures were not as strong and leaders recognise that there is further work to do here, particularly in writing. The school's results in the Year 1 phonics screening check and the proportion of children who reached a good level of development in Reception both remained above the national average in 2016.

Since September, more rigorous pupils' progress meetings have been introduced. At these meetings, staff now use assessment information more effectively to ensure that teaching resources and support are focused in the right place. You have ensured that actions taken by senior leaders are clearer and more decisive. Leaders are able to demonstrate the impact of their actions through regular monitoring and meetings. In addition, you have carefully steered the school to be more outward-looking, by working more closely with local schools and available support.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding policies and procedures are kept up to date and staff are kept informed of any changes. As a result of effective systems, which staff maintain carefully, pupils are safe in this school. The practice of safeguarding is well led and monitored regularly to ensure that procedures are kept up to date and new staff clearly understand the school's systems.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum remain strengths of the school, supported through enrichment activities and the positive ethos of the school. Pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school and experiencing the broad range of curriculum opportunities on offer. Whole-school attendance is just above the national average for primary schools. However, the attendance for disadvantaged pupils is below that of other pupils in the school and is not being monitored closely enough or reported to governors.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

Since the previous inspection, leaders have welcomed the support from the local authority in helping to address the areas for improvement. This support, in the form of school improvement adviser visits and task group meetings, has been focused and effective. Visit reports and minutes of meetings are detailed and demonstrate both challenge and progress. The local authority is confident that senior leaders have the capacity to bring about further improvement in the school. The evidence collected during the inspection supports the view of the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Stuart Bellworthy

Her Majesty's Inspector