

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



5 January 2017

Mrs Claire Jones and Mrs Michelle Vogtlander  
Acting Headteachers  
Cooper Perry Primary School  
Seighford  
Stafford  
Staffordshire  
ST18 9PQ

Dear Mrs Jones and Mrs Vogtlander

### **Short inspection of Cooper Perry Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 13 December 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.**

School leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Pupils reach high academic standards at this school. For several years, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 have been well above the national average. During this inspection, the standard of work seen in lessons and in pupils' books showed that academic performance remains strong because teaching continues to be effective and pupils are keen to learn.

There is no doubt, however, that 2016 has been a turbulent year for the school. Since May 2016, you have stepped up from your assistant headteacher roles to take joint responsibility for leading the school. At the same time, teaching arrangements in almost every class have changed. You have actively sought advice from other leaders in education and are managing your new roles with increasing success. Together, you keep a close eye on teaching and have ensured that standards remain high. Having said this, some aspects of the early years practice, which were identified as areas for improvement by the previous inspection, still need further development. In addition, the uncertainty about future leadership arrangements means that some leadership roles within the school are currently being filled on a temporary basis.

Understandably, in their comments to me and on Parent View, several parents

expressed concern about the absence of the permanent headteacher. However, the majority of parents have very positive views about the quality of care and education provided at Cooper Perry Primary. Many families travel some distance to bring their children here.

Throughout this time of change, the local authority has provided assistance and governors have steered the school with well-informed and sensitive strategic guidance. Academic standards have been maintained and a difficult year has been managed as well as possible.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's procedures for ensuring that pupils are kept safe in school are fit for purpose. Governors and staff have received appropriate training and are aware that children's safety is everyone's responsibility. All the proper checks on staff and visitors are carried out and records are kept up to date and stored securely. Senior leaders and some governors analyse the school's accident book and check site security and supervision arrangements to make sure any patterns or potential problems are picked up quickly. When staff have had concerns about a child's welfare, they have acted with proper regard for the correct procedures and liaised with other organisations in order to protect and help children. Safety and safeguarding are standing items on the agenda for governing body meetings and health and safety audits are carried out regularly.

The supervision of pupils off and on the school buses at the beginning and end of the school day is well organised and the school has well-thought-out plans in place should any pupil miss the bus. Bus drivers report that behaviour on school transport rarely causes a problem and pupils say that bullying or unkind actions by other pupils are uncommon. A small number of parents thought that staff were not always out on the playground soon enough at the beginning of the day. My observations during this inspection found early morning supervision arrangements to be fine. However, it may be worth reminding all staff and parents about expectations for everyone to follow so there is no confusion or misunderstanding.

Through the school's work to gain the Rights Respecting School Award, staff and pupils are very aware of their responsibility to keep themselves and others safe. Pupils are taught how to manage everyday risks, like using the internet or crossing the road, in a sensible way. They are also alerted to the dangers of extreme views and prejudiced thinking. They trust the adults at school and understand the importance of asking for help or advice if they need it.

### **Inspection findings**

- Since May 2016 there have been some significant changes at the school. In the absence of the permanent headteacher, you have taken on the acting headship. You have managed this well. It has been a steep learning curve, but one you have both climbed with energy. You have been quick to ask for advice when you need it and have valued the guidance provided by consultant support and other

leaders in education. Consequently, you quickly overcame initial wobbles and are providing effective leadership. Standards of teaching and learning have been maintained.

- Year after year, academic standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 have been above average. In several years, standards have been well above national figures. The most recent key stage 2 test results and pupils' current work shows that good progress and high standards continue to be the norm at Cooper Perry School.
- The driver for these positive outcomes is effective teaching. In key stages 1 and 2, teaching spurs pupils on to do their best and, in all classes, pupils do a lot of reading and writing. While some pupils' handwriting is a bit messy, the content of their writing is often superb. In some instances, writing is inspired by books that pupils have read. In two key stage 2 classes, for instance, I saw some excellent writing inspired by 'Kensuke's kingdom' and 'The firework maker's daughter'. Elsewhere, teachers seize upon some simple but thoughtfully chosen prompts to generate ideas for pupils' written work. During this inspection, pupils in Years 4 and 5 were using a film clip from a Christmas advert to inspire their writing. This seasonally flavoured resource grabbed and held their attention and motivated them to set some worthy ideas down on paper. Even though the end of this exciting term was clearly in sight and Christmas activities were in full flow, pupils maintained a sense of conscientious purpose and produced some quality work.
- Indeed, these positive attitudes to learning are evident across the whole school. In class, pupils are attentive and responsive to their teachers. They work hard and value the feedback they receive from staff. Pupils who spoke with me were keen to talk about their work and achievements in school. While academic standards are given a high priority, pupils also get the chance to experience success in many non-academic ways too. In the entrance hall, a trophy cabinet displays a selection of annual awards that are presented to pupils for showing qualities such as kindness, initiative or for doing well in sport or art. While these annual awards enable the whole school to recognise and applaud excellence once a year, the school also operates weekly awards in the shape of praise postcards. At the time of this inspection, pupils had just run a competition to design a new version of these postcards and the winning designs were on show. This added another dimension to these valued rewards; using pupils' own talents to design a reward that recognises the efforts and talents of others.
- Around the school, the quality of artwork is notable and pupils report that in the last couple of years they have had more opportunities to take part in different sports, both for enjoyment and competition. Recent tournaments have included netball, tag rugby and athletics. As this inspection was carried out in the last week of the autumn term, pupils were heard singing Christmas carols; they sing beautifully.
- There are very few disadvantaged pupils in the school and their needs vary hugely. At Cooper Perry Primary, you ensure that funding is spent in a bespoke – and sometimes very creative – way to address these different needs. In class, extra support with learning is given where necessary. Other forms of support include a lunchtime nurture group called 'chuckles' which provides a calm,

peaceful and positive haven for pupils who find it hard to cope with aspects of school life.

- As already noted, reading standards are above average at this school. In the most recent results, the middle and lower ability pupils had clearly made good progress. The very brightest pupils, however, did not do quite as well in reading as they did in mathematics and writing. I talked to staff and pupils about this and how reading is taught and promoted in school. I also listened to a group of pupils reading in the library and it is clear that reading is a daily routine. The pupils who shared their books with me were fluent and capable readers who enjoyed books and could talk about authors and the sort of books they like. In the library, envelopes marked 'top secret', contain mystery books that create a sense of intrigue that entices pupils to delve in to find the contents. Again, a simple idea in order to generate interest in books, reading and words. Indeed, many of the older pupils display an impressive vocabulary and are able to discuss the difference between jealousy and envy or explain how they might use words such as disdain or tyranny in their writing. Currently, most pupils are doing well with reading.
- Pupils behave well. On the playground they willingly help one another and in class they work hard and are keen to succeed. Pupils are given many opportunities to have a say in how things are done at school and also to evaluate the school's performance. Members of the school council contribute to and check the school improvement plan. They also consider how they can help to make sure planned actions succeed and act as positive role models for others. Other responsible roles, such as house captains or being part of the sports or eco committees, all help to develop a sense of duty.
- The vast majority of children start school with a level of knowledge and skill in line with that typical for their age. From this starting point, their progress across the early years is erratic. Some children do very well, but some do not. Acquisition of early numeracy skills is a key area where progress for some – and particularly boys – is too slow. This is one reason why the proportions of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year have fluctuated so significantly from one year to the next. It also means that a number of boys have some catching up to do when they move up into key stage 1.
- In fact, provision in the early years, which was a development area at the time of the previous inspection, remains an aspect of the school's work that, while improved, still requires further input. Currently, some of the teaching areas could be more inspiring. To a degree, the layout of the building and several recent changes of staff have been factors in limiting the pace of improvement in this part of the school. Even so, a continued injection of imagination and expert advice would not go amiss. In addition, there are too few activities that promote early numeracy skills, especially for boys. You are alert to this and have sent staff to learn from other settings. Practice is improving; routines are well established, phonics teaching is very effective and some lively activities, such as the lively 'dough disco', help to develop children's counting, coordination, concentration and dexterity.
- While pupils, mainly boys, often enter Year 1 with quite a lot of early numeracy

work still to cover, their progress from here on picks up. The quality of mathematics teaching in some parts of the school is exceptionally strong. In Year 2, for example, teaching is fine tuned to pupils' learning needs and pupils get stuck into tasks that build conceptual understanding with secure and meaningful efficiency. Resources are used wisely and teacher questioning is spot on. Pupils of all abilities gain a lot of ground and are well prepared for further success in key stage 2.

- Overall attendance figures are in line with the national average and the majority of pupils attend regularly and on time. For the current year so far, almost a third of pupils have achieved 100% attendance. On the other hand, 17 pupils have under 90% attendance, which equates to half a day a week of missed school. There are some genuine and understandable reasons in some cases, but not all. On top of this, a small number of parents regularly bring their children to school a few minutes late without good reason. This is a bad habit that means they miss the start of lessons.
- By taking on joint responsibility for the acting headship, you have stepped up from your classroom and assistant headteacher responsibilities. In turn, other staff have had to take on leadership roles, some new appointments have been made, and some staff have been moved to teach in different year groups. This has been a lot of change to manage at once. Nevertheless, you have actively sought expert advice, have acted upon it and are making the most of the situation. Within school, you have identified talent and are providing training and guidance to help new leaders develop their skills. You have established links with other schools so staff can share practice and your regular monitoring of teaching provides teachers with helpful feedback. You have made sure that workloads and responsibilities are shared in a proportionate and effective way so that the school can run smoothly. All in all, you have made sure that roles are fully understood, lines of accountability are clear and all get the training, challenge and support they need in order to do their jobs well. Clearly, the temporary nature of these arrangements means that uncertainty about the long-term leadership of the school remains. Understandably, parents have expressed some concerns about this, although the majority of parents remain very satisfied with the quality of education and care at the school.
- Governance has strengthened since the previous inspection. Records from meetings and my conversations with governors revealed governors to be well informed about standards and alert to the school's strengths and development areas. They have managed this year's temporary leadership arrangements with careful attention and with a view to minimising disruption to pupils' education. In this respect, they have been successful.

### **Next steps for the school**

#### **Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:**

- resolve the uncertainty about the long-term leadership of the school

- maintain, and improve upon, the current working relationships with other local schools in order to learn from good practice, moderate standards and share expertise
- secure sustainable improvements in the early years, by:
  - developing a more stimulating learning environment, both indoors and outside
  - incorporating more opportunities for early numeracy work, especially for boys, into child-initiated and adult-led activities
- continue to work with families to improve punctuality for those pupils who regularly turn up late or miss too much school without good cause.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and the teaching staff. I also met with the school's office manager, four governors, an educational consultant who is working with you and had a telephone conversation with a local authority officer. I carried out short observations of teaching in all classes, saw pupils practising for an end-of-term performance and looked at pupils' work in books and on display. I observed the school's breakfast club, talked with pupils in lessons and in the dining hall and heard pupils read. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.

I paid particular attention to several key lines of enquiry. These included: progress across the early years and key stage 1, challenge for the most able, the impact of recent changes to leadership arrangements, pupils' attendance and safeguarding.

By the end of the inspection, there were 57 recent responses on Parent View and 42 written comments. There were seven responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 15 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I took account of these responses and talked with pupils about how school staff listened to their views. I looked at a number of documents, including: information about pupils' progress, the school's own evaluation of its performance, improvement plans, information about the work of the governing body, records of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and learning, local authority reports about the school and several school policy documents. I also checked the school's website and the procedures for keeping pupils safe. I asked members of staff, pupils and parents about safeguarding matters.