

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



12 January 2017

Miss Newton
Headteacher
Marden Primary Academy
Marden
Hereford
Herefordshire
HR1 3EW

Dear Miss Newton

Short inspection of Marden Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in January 2009.

In January 2014, Marden Primary became an academy and joined the Herefordshire Marches Federation of Academies.

This school continues to be good.

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

Leaders and governors are passionate about what they do and are committed to ensuring 'individuals matter' at this school. Pupils behave very well around the school and were keen to greet me with welcoming 'hellos'. The school makes very good use of its magnificent grounds and is proud of its outdoor learning opportunities.

All of the teachers who responded to the online survey feel proud to work at Marden Primary. You and your governors lead a motivated workforce who report that they are treated fairly and with respect. Staff thoroughly enjoy working at the school. Their enjoyment was evident from how keen they were to share their practice and celebrate the learning that takes place in their classrooms. One parent commented via Ofsted's free text service: 'The teachers are enthusiastic, caring and supportive.'

You and your deputy headteacher are rightly proud of the further improvements that have been made since the predecessor school was last inspected. The outdoor provision in the early years has been improved. You have also focused carefully on

developing marking, another area that you were tasked with improving. Pupils' books show that teachers consistently follow the policy you have agreed. Developments in marking also offer additional challenges to pupils, including those that are most able.

The links that have been established with the federation have strengthened provision further. Professionals with specialisms and expertise in areas such as special educational needs and/or disabilities and safeguarding are providing an additional arm of support to the school. This support is helping drive forward further improvements and helps schools within the federation learn from one another and share effective practice.

You have self-evaluated the effectiveness of the school and have identified priorities to take forward in a school development plan. Nevertheless, your work to monitor and evaluate the early years provision is not as well informed and thorough as it could be. The federation does have an early years strategic plan to support the development of all schools within its family.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Due to strong relationships and the size of the school, teachers know pupils well and understand their needs. Staff that I spoke with know how to manage a concern about a child's welfare or safety should one arise. The school has identified key adults who are ready to listen to any concerns and act upon them as required.

Leaders pay close attention to ensuring staff are trained in the latest statutory guidance. While safeguarding records are complete, some aspects of paperwork do not fully adhere to the school's policy. This is an administrative matter which can be swiftly rectified.

A programme of 'protective behaviours' is provided for older pupils to help them learn how to stay safe. Leaders plan to extend this programme in the forthcoming year and recognise the positive impact it has had on pupils' personal development and well-being.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have improved outcomes at key stage 2 and pupils leave school with the skills required to be ready for the next stage of learning. Provisional data for 2016 indicates that rates of progress in reading and mathematics are significantly above those found nationally. Outcomes were also strong in the English, grammar, spelling and punctuation test, with all pupils in Year 6 reaching the expected standard. The school has identified that progress was not as strong in writing in 2016. Leaders have put plans in place which are already resulting in stronger rates of progress in writing across the school.
- The proportions of children reaching a good level of development in the early

years have also risen over the last three years and have been consistently above national averages. Outcomes in key stage 1 are more variable. However, this variability is in part due to the size and specific context of different cohorts.

- Governors talk with pride and enthusiasm about the school. Governors visit the school very regularly and attend standards meetings to review the progress that pupils are making. Leaders also provide governors with useful portfolios that help them keep abreast of updates and key information about the impact of the school's work.
- Work in books shows that pupils of all abilities are making consistently strong progress from their different starting points. This progress is particularly noticeable in English. In English, pupils study a wide range of genres and their writing is enhanced further through the wider curriculum.
- The curriculum is well planned and taught through a topic approach. In Years 3 and 4, curriculum folders show that pupils learn about a wide range of different faiths and religions. Pupils are also studying the Egyptians and have created incredible statues through their design and technology studies. Pupils' work in this topic demonstrates the close attention leaders have paid to developing a creative curriculum that responds to the pupils' interests and enables them to succeed in many different subjects.
- The school has developed tracking and assessment systems to monitor the progress that pupils make. Assessment information indicates that the school has been successful in ensuring there is little variation between the performance of different groups of children, including those that are disadvantaged.
- Pupils benefit from the support of a wide range of adults. In Years 1 and 2, pupils were observed working in small groups with adults. Interesting activities and effective questioning from adults ensures that pupils are engaged and making progress.
- The school has invested in training to support the teaching of phonics. I observed adults encouraging pupils to use their phonics skills during the inspection. It is clear from pupils' writing that phonics teaching is having a positive impact. Pupils in key stage 1 who read with me found some words quite difficult to sound out. However, the pupils' books do demonstrate that teaching is providing opportunities to apply and regularly practise phonics skills in their writing.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to the online survey, and that I spoke to, are supportive of the school and would recommend it. Comments from parents on Ofsted's free text service include, 'my daughter has thrived at Marden Primary' and 'it is a fantastic school that teaches great morals and respect to the children'.
- Pupils behave well. In lessons they are attentive and follow instructions. Records of governors' meetings and visits to school frequently highlight the impressive conduct of all children.
- Published attendance figures indicate that the school is not yet in line with national levels. However, some of the variability in attendance is as a result of having such a small cohort of pupils compared with other schools; one pupil can have a significant effect on statistics. The school tracks attendance carefully and

can evidence how they support individual families. The school has invested in specific resources to improve attendance, which is resulting in higher levels of engagement with harder-to-reach families. Taking into account some exceptional circumstances, the school's attendance is above national levels.

- The federation provide effective support to the school. Leaders from different schools regularly meet to share good practice and benchmark the progress pupils are making. The support of the federation is providing important added capacity to a smaller school. The joint working of the schools within the federation supports the ongoing training of staff and implementation of new strategies.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the evaluation of early years provision is sufficiently well informed and thorough
- all paperwork relating to safeguarding adheres to the school's policy.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the deputy headteacher to review the school's self-evaluation documents and various action plans. Key lines of enquiry were agreed at the meeting to structure inspection activity. The key lines of enquiry included: how well leaders and governors have created a culture of safeguarding at the school and are improving pupils' attendance; the extent to which lower-attaining and most-able pupils are supported to make progress; the effectiveness of phonics teaching and whether pupils make consistently strong progress across the curriculum.

I observed lessons in the early years and key stage 1. During observations and in separate meetings, we reviewed pupils' books across several areas of the curriculum.

I scrutinised a range of documentation including: the school's single central record, personnel files, child protection folders, governing body minutes, assessment information, risk assessments, training records, analysis of attendance and details of pupil premium expenditure.

I met with parents at the school gate, considered the 16 responses to Parent View and eight responses via free text. I reviewed the 11 responses to the staff questionnaire and 51 responses from children.

I met with two representatives from the governing body and the joint chief executive of the Herefordshire Marches Federation of Academies.