

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



Patrick Mildren
Headteacher
Canonbury Primary School
Canonbury Road
London
N1 2UT

Dear Mr Mildren

Short inspection of Canonbury Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2017, 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 July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since you joined the school in September 2014, you have built a leadership team with a strong capacity to drive improvement. You have strengthened leadership at senior and middle levels. You appointed two deputy headteachers, who, together with middle leaders, are leading well on teaching, learning, assessment, and the curriculum.

You have galvanised the school community and unified efforts towards the concept of a 'learning school'. In response to the findings of the previous inspection, you have placed learning at the heart of improvement activities, establishing criteria against which teachers consistently measure their own effectiveness. You ensure that the individual needs of pupils are identified and addressed through the rigorous 'assessment conferences' involving senior leaders and the class teacher. Teachers are in no doubt about the actions they need to take to bolster the progress of pupils who are at risk of underperforming.

You have heightened the sense of belonging within the school community. Pupils talk about being a 'Canonbury pupil' and refer to their school as 'a family'. Pupils display exemplary learning attitudes and they are acutely aware of their responsibilities as learners, pupils and friends. Parents are complimentary about the school's leadership. They say they value the harmony that exists in this culturally diverse school community.

Safeguarding is effective.

Since 2015, when one of the deputy headteachers took on the role of the designated safeguarding lead, this aspect of the school's work has been strengthened. Together with the chair of the governing body, he has ensured that safeguarding arrangements in school meet statutory requirements and are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Recruitment procedures are rigorous, going through a 'double check' with the local authority's human resources department, followed by another scrutiny by the school. Staff training is up to date. The designated safeguarding lead undertakes regular short 'quizzes' during staff meetings to refresh awareness. Office staff are aware of potentially vulnerable pupils and are therefore able to raise alarms or concerns promptly. Staff at all levels are clear about reporting procedures and records of referrals indicate vigilance among staff.

Pupils feel safe at school and their parents confirm this. Pupils say they know they are well cared for. As one pupil said, 'I am always excited to come to school from the moment I wake up'. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe at school, at home and when on the internet. They displayed confidence in saying that if they have any concerns or worries at all, 'adults will stop what they are doing to listen to us'.

Inspection findings

- The school's work to tackle the underachievement of some disadvantaged pupils is proving successful. The differences between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and others are diminishing. This is in part due to effective use of pupil premium funding to support their learning.
- The most able disadvantaged pupils are now achieving well in mathematics and reading. For example, in mathematics Year 6 pupils' work demonstrated good or better progress, reflecting the opportunities they have been given to secure mastery. The pupils I listened to displayed a genuine love for reading, choosing more sophisticated texts which offer both enjoyment and challenge. However, there is still a difference in outcomes with the most able disadvantaged pupils doing less well than others in writing. School leaders understand that this must be a key priority for further improvement.
- Past differences between the performance of boys and girls in reading and writing are also diminishing. Boys respond positively to reading workshops, talking extensively about books. They display enthusiasm when talking about characters in texts. Those I heard reading demonstrated well-developed inference and deduction skills. Boys are thriving on the extended writing opportunities they are given and are able to produce high quality writing across a wide range of genres. However, they are not always confident in using their reading and phonic skills to spell accurately. As a result, their achievements still lag a little behind those of girls.
- In 2016, pupils at the end of key stage 1 did not make the progress expected of

them in writing and mathematics. Current pupils in key stage 1 are making good progress. In mathematics, they frequently engage in activities aimed at practising and consolidating their skills. The use of models and images ensures that pupils develop a deep understanding of numbers and calculations. Pupils' writing has improved as leaders insist on teachers providing them with more frequent opportunities for extended writing.

- Achievement in phonics is strong, with pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, making better progress than their peers nationally. The less able readers accurately use their phonic knowledge to work out difficult and unfamiliar words.
- You recognise, however, that very few pupils in key stage 1 achieve greater depth. You also recognise that most-able pupils in this phase, including the most able disadvantaged, need to be stretched and challenged more so they can exceed standards set for their age.
- You have rightly focused your energies and resources on improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. You provide clear expectations of the quality of learning experiences pupils should receive in lessons. The analysis of pupils' work is used to inform the 'assessment conferences' that focus on individual pupils' progress. These actions are helping current pupils to make rapid progress.
- Teaching has also been strengthened through the school's work on the curriculum. Pupils enjoy and excel in an enriched curriculum. For example, they refer to Canonbury as a 'musical' school, talking about the musical instruments they are learning and the performance opportunities available for them. Teachers are encouraged to be innovative and use 'lesson studies' to evaluate the effectiveness of a series of lessons planned to 'try something different'. A good example of this is a lesson study on developing good practice to facilitate pupils' mastery in mathematics.
- Attendance has been below average but shows year-on-year improvement as a result of the school's work. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has risen rapidly so that it is now close to national average, with a considerable reduction in persistent absenteeism. The attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has also risen rapidly. The decision of school leaders to hold parents to account for their children's attendance has paid off. There is a unified message from the school at all levels that attendance is paramount. The system for tracking and intervening when pupils are identified to be at risk of non-attendance is helping you to lead improvements to attendance effectively. School leaders also use the rich information they hold about families to offer tailored support to improve attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able disadvantaged pupils receive appropriate support and challenge to flourish as exemplary writers

- pupils in key stage 1 are challenged and stretched enough to enable a higher proportion of them to achieve greater depth.

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

Yours sincerely

Edison David
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

This inspection particularly focused on the following aspects of the school's work:

- the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, in key stage 2 in reading, writing, and mathematics
- the effectiveness of the actions of leaders to diminish the difference between boys and girls in reading, writing, and mathematics
- the actions school leaders have taken to ensure that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is close to or in line with national averages
- the impact of leadership and management on the quality of teaching
- the effectiveness of the actions leaders have taken to address issues relating to pupils' attendance.

To explore those aspects during this short inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you, the two deputy headteachers, and the school's business manager. I talked with parents and gathered their views about the school, and also considered their responses to Parent View. I met with a group of pupils to discuss their experiences in lessons, the extent to which they feel safe and also their views on learning and behaviour in general. I held discussions with the local authority's head of school improvement and with three governors. I also considered documentation provided by the school and information posted on the school website. I considered information in an email sent to the inspection administrator by one of your co-opted governors who was overseas at the time of the inspection. With the school's business manager, I looked at recruitment files, the single central record, and the analysis of pupils' attendance. Alongside you or one of the deputy headteachers, I visited all classes to observe learning and I undertook an extensive scrutiny of the work produced by disadvantaged pupils. I listened to reading by pupils from across the ability range.