

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



20 February 2017

Mrs Sarah Penny
Headteacher
Plumpton School
Plumpton
Penrith
Cumbria
CA11 9PA

Dear Mrs Penny

Short inspection of Plumpton School

Following my visit to the school on 8 February 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. When you are not teaching, you spend much of your time ensuring that all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, receive the very best support.

The school is like a family. A number of parents I spoke to told me that they had moved their children to this school because of the friendly and caring atmosphere. Pupils are eager to come to school, so attendance is above the national average.

You are the guardian of important traditions such as your 'family service' where all pupils have lunch together. The oldest pupils serve the food and all the children show impeccable manners as they wait for everyone to be served before they eat.

One parent commented: 'This is a very caring school. The older children set a very good example for the younger children. All of the teachers know the children very well and recognise and celebrate their strengths.'

Members of the governing body know pupils and their families well and have high expectations for all pupils. You use your partnership with local schools through your 'cluster' well. Records of peer reviews show that they are working well to help you refine some classroom practice.

There is a warm and welcoming before- and after-school club. Staff pay great

attention to pupils' individual needs including their preferences of breakfast cereal. This is typical of the school's nurturing approach.

Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. They say that they are happy in school. Girls and boys play football harmoniously and pupils are rightly proud of their sporting prowess and recent success in the local cross-country competition.

You have responded well to the areas for improvement from the previous inspection and teaching has improved, leading to pupils making better progress. You reorganised the classes to maximise pupils' learning and progress to good effect. There is much more planning for different abilities, although the range of abilities is so wide, there is further work to be done.

In 2016 at the end of key stage 2, all pupils made at least expected progress in mathematics and reading, and progress in writing was significantly above the national average. However, no pupils achieved a high standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 2. This is because their learning is not always challenging enough.

To help pupils achieve a high standard in mathematics you have enlisted the help of a teacher from the local secondary school. The teacher worked with the most able mathematicians in the Year 5 and 6 class to help them improve their problem-solving skills. You are also using your teaching assistant well to provide extra challenge for these pupils. However, teaching does not consistently challenge the most able pupils throughout the rest of the juniors.

Last year, pupils achieved well in key stage 1 and a higher-than-average proportion of pupils achieved beyond the expected standards in mathematics and writing. However, a few pupils did not achieve the expected standard in reading. This is because there is not enough focus upon reading and writing in Reception Year. Some of the least able pupils, especially boys, are unable to read at a level appropriate for their age. You have responded to this with gusto and you have successfully raised the profile of reading. Many parents now come to school on a Wednesday afternoon to read with their children and you have enlisted the help of your very own reading dog. He motivates many reluctant readers, who are encouraged when they receive a 'paw print' stamp in their reading journals.

There is good support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A few pupils have speech and language difficulties on entry to the school and despite significant improvement, their reading skills continue to lag behind those of their peers. Yet they make good progress from their starting points due to strong multi-agency work, good support and careful monitoring.

Safeguarding is effective.

The single central record of checks made on the suitability of adults to work with children meets requirements. All staff have regular child protection training. Child protection records are kept securely. You have very detailed notes of the many

meetings you attend and discussions that take place about pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. However, there is no overview or timeline of these events so it may be difficult for another member of staff to follow them up in your absence.

Appropriate risk assessments are in place for the school site and Ratcher, the reading dog. You engage well with local agencies to support families facing difficult circumstances.

Inspection findings

- Standards are high in the Year 5 and 6 class. Scrutiny of English and mathematics books shows that pupils are making good progress. The quality of work in English books is high and pupils are adept at drafting and redrafting their work. There is a wide range of abilities in the class; the least able pupils do not always get enough support to master the basics of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Reading is taught well in Years 1 and 2. Scrutiny of reading records shows that pupils enjoy reading regularly. There are meticulous records of guided reading sessions and pupils are given a clear visual representation of the letters and sounds they need to work on which helps them practise at school and at home.
- Pupils make good progress across a range of subjects including physical education, history and art. There are some beautiful displays of art work around the school including Viking ships and self-portraits.
- You and I scrutinised mathematics workbooks with the most able pupils in Years 3 and 4 and discussed their work with them. They said that although they enjoyed mathematics, they found the work easy. Their work showed that they had successfully repeated the same calculations over a number of pages. There were some 'challenge questions' but they were not challenging enough and did not require pupils to apply more complex methodology.
- In Reception Year, pupils, including boys, behave well due to well-rehearsed routines of counting and lining up. Last year, none of the boys in Reception Year achieved the early learning goal of behaviour and listening. I observed that a few boys lost concentration when the activity on the carpet did not sustain their interest because it was too simple. Nevertheless, they dutifully listened to the teacher and showed great enthusiasm when they got ready to go out on their 'welly walk'.
- In Reception Year, I observed children counting up to 20. The vast majority of children made good progress in this activity but for a few, who could already confidently count well beyond 20, it was too easy. Conversely, for the very few Nursery children, finding a missing number was too difficult. Opportunities were missed to use the teaching assistant more effectively to boost progress for these groups.
- I read with a few of the least able boys in Reception Year but they were unable to decode words because they have not been taught phonics effectively enough. The curriculum is not sufficiently adapted to their needs so they struggle to catch

up. Although there are a great number of opportunities to practise reading and writing inside the classroom, there are few outside, which is where the boys spend most of their time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils make better progress in mathematics
- teaching is better adapted to suit the wide range of abilities in each class
- there is a greater focus upon the teaching of reading in Reception Year.

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

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

You and I jointly observed teaching in all classes. I met with you and members of the governing body. We spoke with a range of pupils in lessons and at social times. I listened to pupils read, scrutinised reading records and looked at workbooks. I analysed the school's record of checks made on the suitability of staff, records of child protection and staff training and discussed other aspects of safeguarding with you. I looked at the school website and analysed the school self-evaluation and school improvement plan. I had conversations with parents in the playground at the beginning of the school day and considered six responses from the staff survey and 21 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including a number of free text comments made by parents.