

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



23 February 2017

Mrs Jill Alexander-Steele
Headteacher
Ribbleton Avenue Methodist Junior School
Emerson Road
Ribbleton
Preston
PR1 5SN

Dear Mrs Alexander-Steele

Short inspection of Ribbleton Avenue Methodist Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

You, along with your leadership team and governors, continue to ensure that Ribbleton Avenue Methodist Junior School is a fully inclusive school where every individual is highly valued. Leaders are determined to provide the highest quality of education within a nurturing community. The learning environment is purposeful, calm and respectful. There is a welcoming and warm feeling to the school with strong relationships between staff and between pupils. Parents say, 'This is a great school' and value the knowledge that staff have of individual pupils and the care that school staff give their children. They are also delighted with the support offered to pupils transferring from other schools, particularly the infant school, which shares the site. One parent stated that this is the 'best school I have come across'.

Your leadership team, with its wealth of experience, has identified and provided for a range of academic, social, behavioural and emotional support. You and your staff team have reviewed the curriculum and teachers plan topics which inspire pupils' interest, living out the school's motto: 'Where children are lamps to be lit not vessels to be filled'. Teachers and teaching assistants plan well together to meet the range of learning needs in each class. Pupils value the range of opportunities offered. Some pupils spoke at length about the opportunity to learn to swim in Year 5. Teachers and other staff teach reading well.

Teachers and teaching assistants offer additional support in phonics to those pupils who need it. Attainment and progress in the national tests, and for current pupils, show that mathematics is taught very well. Pupils also state that this is one of their favourite subjects. Topic work is carefully planned to appeal to the pupils' imaginations. This has included linking work to the Harry Potter stories.

Parents and pupils value the extra-curricular activities available to pupils. The 'wake and shake' breakfast club is well supported and is staffed using the pupil premium and sports premium funding. This is just one strategy for raising attendance and punctuality rates.

You and your team have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have planned a variety of interesting writing experiences, including a spaceship crashing on the school field, to stimulate pupils' writing. Older pupils write creatively, with good use of vocabulary to engage their reader. They include an increasing range of punctuation and words are generally spelled correctly. However, younger and least-able pupils' writing shows inconsistent spelling and application of phonics and less well-managed sentence structures. Correct use of tense is also inconsistent. This is also a problem for pupils who speak English as an additional language.

School assessment, tracking data and discussions with leaders show that progress and attainment are monitored closely, with support given where needed. Pupil progress meetings are held each term. The new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) uses assessment data from these meetings and pupils' individual education plans to review the level of support needed. Teaching assistants are well qualified and trained to deliver a variety of interventions to boost pupils' academic and social development and increase their confidence and resilience. As a result, current pupils are on track to improve on last year's end-of-key-stage results.

During the inspection, we discussed the school's strategies to improve attendance. Although systems are very robust, the number of pupils taking extended holidays severely affects the school's attendance rates. However, when these absences (and those due to observance of religious festivals) are removed, school attendance rates are in line with national averages. We also discussed the need for consistent application of spelling, punctuation and grammar rules to pupils' writing to further raise standards in this aspect of English.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Governors have appointed high-quality staff to important staffing positions to ensure that pupils at risk are identified and supported appropriately. Safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose.

Parents and pupils feel that the school is a safe place to be. Leaders, including governors, ensure that staff receive high-quality training, and as a result, staff know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff are very clear about the

school's procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they have regarding the safeguarding of pupils.

Pupils are taught about how to stay safe online. Leaders have introduced and implemented clear procedures for internet safety, which are shared and understood by pupils. Pupils demonstrated their understanding of this during an appropriately informative assembly on e-safety. Pupils understand the dangers associated with internet use and report concerns to staff. Filtering is in place and is used effectively.

Inspection findings

- Your self-evaluation accurately judges the school to be good. Governors and the local authority adviser confirm that the school continues to improve under your committed and determined leadership. Governors have a good understanding of standards of attainment and progress in the school and challenge your viewpoints by drawing on their first-hand evidence from visits into school. The local authority believes that school leaders have been adept at building professional and beneficial links with other schools and agencies, including those with the feeder infant school.
- Robust procedures to tackle attendance, including a range of rewards and the involvement of parents, are having a positive impact on attendance rates. The school has correctly identified two strands to its attendance strategy – rewards and provision to encourage pupils to attend and a strict monitoring of families with poor attendance. The school is also very aware of the impact of cultural and religious influences on its overall absence rates.
- Leaders use a variety of strategies to manage pupils at risk of exclusion. Recent work undertaken by the learning mentor has helped to reduce the number of exclusions. Clear behaviour plans and support from other schools and agencies have enabled vulnerable pupils to be reintegrated into school. Leaders have devised clear procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour and are insistent that physical violence will not be accepted.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. A good range of play equipment and activities is available at lunchtime and pupils are supported well by the learning mentor and sports coach to provide enjoyable activities for the pupils. Good behaviour in lessons ensures that pupils are on task and engaged, allowing them to produce work of an improving quality.
- Writing by Years 5 and 6 pupils shows a range of adventurous vocabulary across a variety of types of writing. Sentence structure is strong in the writing of higher-ability pupils and improving in that of middle- and lower-ability pupils. Narrative writing across both year groups is engaging and interesting to read.
- Standards at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 in reading were broadly in line with national expectations. Mathematics results were above national expectations but writing results fell from previous years. The results of middle-ability pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were below national

expectations. The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was significantly below.

- Leaders have a good understanding of the standards and quality of pupils' work. They use a variety of strategies to support pupils to enable them to attain and progress well, including academic and social/emotional support. Rigorous monitoring ensures that these improvements continue.
- Staff and governors have been trained in the requirements of 'Keeping children safe in education 2016'. The school's safeguarding policy includes information about the important areas of 'sexting' and peer-on-peer abuse. During the inspection – on internet safety day – a whole-school assembly successfully raised the issues around keeping safe when using the internet.
- The family support worker, through her previous experience in social care, has an extensive knowledge and experience of the child-protection and safeguarding system and uses this well to ensure that children are supported well through the various levels of need. Records are accurate, including chronology and actions taken. Thresholds for escalation and de-escalation of support are judged according to individual need. Leaders work with a range of agencies to provide appropriate support and protection.
- Some slight omissions on the website were addressed during the inspection.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- they continue to monitor pupils' absence, using the full range of strategies devised by the school to reward attendance and challenge absence
- all pupils, but particularly lower-ability pupils and those who speak English as an additional language, apply their knowledge and understanding of spelling, grammar and punctuation rules more effectively to their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Shackleton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, parents, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I spoke with the school's family support worker, SENCo and learning mentor. Also, I talked with small groups of pupils around the school and in lessons. In addition, I jointly observed teaching and learning in Years 5 and 6 and scrutinised writing books from pupils in all year groups. I examined a range of documentation, including documents relating to attendance, safeguarding and exclusions. I also looked at minutes of the governing body, reports written by local authority advisers, the school's self-evaluation of how well it is doing, the school's improvement priorities and the school's assessment information. I also undertook a review of the school's website. As part of the inspection, I considered two responses from parents to Ofsted's free-text service. There were no responses to the pupil or staff questionnaires.