

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Angela Ridley
Mersey Drive Community Primary School
Mersey Drive
Whitefield
Manchester
M45 8LN

Dear Ms Ridley

Short inspection of Mersey Drive Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 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 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. Your passion and vision for the school are shared by all through a commitment to the school motto of 'Enjoy learning; aim high', which is embedded in all aspects of school life. You lead by example and have shown great determination to further improve the school. You have galvanised your team of teachers to ensure that all pupils continue to receive a good-quality education. It is very much a team approach. All members of the school community work together on behalf of the pupils, and morale among the staff is high. Governors play an important role in the school. They are clear about how pupils' outcomes compare with those nationally and link well with leaders to hold them to account for the work that is ongoing. You and your team provide them with detailed information about the school. In return, governors provide helpful support and challenge to your work.

Pupils say that they are happy in school and continue to benefit from interesting and well-planned learning opportunities across a range of subjects. You ensure that all pupils are provided with enrichment and additional activities to stimulate their curiosity about the world, which broadens their understanding and passion to learn. Artistic, sporting and cultural opportunities add to the focus on academic success and are greatly appreciated by the pupils. You are committed to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to learn about respect for the environment and others. The eco student council is very active and the councillors work to organise events in the local community, such as planting trees in Boz Park, as well as wider fund-raising events for selected charities. The work of these pupils is commendable. Community links, including those with local religious leaders, enhance the pupils' appreciation of

other faiths and cultures. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the visits of an imam and rabbi during 'equality and diversity week'.

An area for improvement identified in the previous inspection was to strengthen leadership further by improving observations of teaching, to identify more clearly the achievement of pupils. In response, you have worked with your leadership team to ensure that there are frequent checks on the quality of teaching and learning. You are using the information gained to improve aspects of practice so that more teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff appreciate the conversations they have with you and your leaders about how to improve even further. A bespoke programme is provided for staff, with quality professional development delivered for all staff through the Bury Primary Learning Collaborative and other outside providers. This continuous, quality professional development, in conjunction with regular discussion about teaching, is creating a more skilled and effective staff. Your evaluation is accurate that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within the school is good.

While the school continues to provide a good-quality education for the pupils, there is a need to ensure that writing is strengthened in subjects other than English. Pupils do not consistently produce the same quality of writing in their topic work as they do in their English studies. Also, it is important that the school website provides information about governors: how they are organised and how they carry out their duties to support and challenge school leaders.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safeguarding of pupils is given the highest priority in the school. The school has the appropriate policies and ensures that these are followed in detail. You have made sure that arrangements for the care and protection of pupils, families and staff are thorough and are working well. As acknowledged at the previous inspection, all pupils, including those whose circumstances might put them at risk, are well cared for. The benefit of such support shows in the positive improvement in many pupils' well-being as evidenced in the school's records. Records kept by staff about concerns, referrals and support for pupils are detailed and of high quality. The learning mentor is diligent in her work and she ensures that links with other professionals are developed well to enhance pupils' safety.

The newly appointed governor with responsibility for child protection has a deep understanding of his role and a commitment to continuing the rigorous focus on keeping children safe. You ensure that staff and governors engage in a wide range of safeguarding training, using expertise from within the school, the local authority and from further afield. This means that staff are up to date in their knowledge of child protection. You have trained and challenged staff so they understand the risks to pupils of exposure to radicalised views of life in modern Britain. Staff understand how to recognise, record and report important issues, such as neglect and online grooming. Staff know how to refer any concerns they might have about an adult harming a child. The work of the early years leader to help parents understand how the school is working to keep their children safe is of high quality and is much appreciated by parents.

Inspection findings

- Mersey Drive remains a good and improving school because of strengths in leadership, teaching and learning, pupils' achievement and their personal development. Pupils continue to achieve well in their reading, writing and mathematics and are well prepared for their life beyond primary education. Pupils' achievement is good because of the consistently good quality of teaching and learning on a day-to-day basis.
- The headteacher, who is ably supported by the deputy headteacher, is relentless in improving teaching and learning. Along with staff, they check the quality of work in pupils' books, the quality of classroom provision and how different groups of learners are progressing in lessons. By working with staff in a developmental way, they ensure that there is a common understanding of what needs to be done to ensure that every pupil improves.
- As a result of this focused work, all classrooms are very positive places. Expectations of what every pupil can achieve are high. Relationships between the staff and the pupils are positive. Teachers work hard to ensure that lessons are interesting and provide interesting resources to help stimulate the pupils in their thinking.
- Writing has been an area of focus. There has been significant, effective work to ensure that by the time pupils leave Mersey Drive, their quality of writing is at the same standard as their reading. To achieve this, communication and language are prioritised in the early years. All staff model language well and pay precise attention to children's speaking skills. This is enhanced by very effective phonics sessions which enable pupils to begin to build language. Staff are skilled in supporting the children to use this learning to begin to form letters and key words. This work is built on effectively in Year 1, where a significant number of the pupils write simple sentences.
- Across the school, teachers continue to focus on the development of writing. All writing sessions are enhanced by stimulating resources. For example, Year 4 pupils developed some very imaginative language as they reflected on landscape photographs provided by their teacher. Year 5 pupils produced some sophisticated descriptions based on their study of Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night'. Year 6 pupils benefited from an exploration of the school grounds to stimulate thinking about their senses. Pupils now make consistently good progress and by the time they leave school all pupils are achieving well in their writing.
- Leaders are committed to ensure that a higher proportion of pupils achieve above the expected standard by the end of both key stages 1 and 2. The most able pupils are now being appropriately challenged in their reading, writing and mathematics. The assessment coordinator keeps a very close check on the progress of these pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. These pupils are challenged effectively in lessons. Their learning is supported well by specific events within the 'Whitefield gifted and talented cluster'; able writers and debating days; and specialist teaching from staff from Castlebrook High School.
- Pupils are very happy at school, enjoy their learning and appreciate the additional

activities that the school provides. Pupils are extremely polite, behave well at all times and are very respectful to each other. Pupils show great maturity in their understanding of their responsibility to make the school better. Older pupils take on many roles to help their teachers. They take care of the younger children at playtimes and are skilled in their role as peer mediators. The school's open culture actively promotes all aspects of pupils' welfare. Pupils say that they feel safe at all times. They understand how to keep themselves and others safe in different situations and settings. They trust leaders to take rapid and appropriate action to resolve any concerns they have. Pupils are rightly proud of their school and are a great credit to their teachers and families.

- The school is inclusive and all pupils greatly benefit from the enhanced autistic spectrum condition (ASC) provision 'Arches', which provides an assessment unit for Bury Local Authority. 'Bridges' works effectively to support inclusion of ASC children and children with communication difficulties into mainstream classrooms, usually within Mersey Drive. Pupils learn to understand the importance of inclusion. Staff are sensitive in their understanding that social communication difficulties and autism are lifelong conditions and pupils will face different challenges during their time at school. The school staff work together to help pupils to address these challenges, while at the same time developing their academic skills. These pupils, and others who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are fully involved in the life of the school.
- The school works extremely well with parents and families. Parents appreciate being involved in supporting their children's learning in the early years. The school is committed to providing funding and staffing to develop a successful parental engagement programme and works closely with the local children's centre and Bury Adult Learning to provide courses for parent groups. Parents are highly positive about the support their children receive, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. While individual parents expressed concerns about the provision provided by the school, these were not borne out by the findings of this inspection. All those who completed the online survey would recommend the school to others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' writing in history, geography and science is at least the same quality as it is in English
- information about how governors carry out their duties to support and challenge the school leadership are clearly stated on the school's website.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Morley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

As part of the inspection, I reviewed the previous inspection report and checked information about the achievement of pupils. You shared with me your evaluation of the school and improvement plan, which I reviewed before the inspection and with you at the start of the school day. Together we looked at information about pupils' current progress. We observed and discussed pupils' learning and we talked to pupils about their work. I met with a representative from the local authority and two members of the governing body, including the chair. I reviewed the school's records of checks made about staff suitability to work with children. We considered the school's child protection policy. I considered examples of case files, as well as evidence of your work with other professionals. During the inspection, we observed a number of lessons and watched the pupils in a drama session in their preparation to perform at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester.