

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



11 April 2017

Fiona Feeney
Headteacher
Warstones Primary School
Warstones Road
Penn
Wolverhampton
West Midlands
WV4 4LU

Dear Mrs Feeney

Short inspection of Warstones Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 30 March 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 February 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 your appointment in September 2015, you have taken a robust approach to fully evaluating the school's performance. As a result, you have a clear understanding of what is working well and the actions you and others need to take in order to improve the school further. You have rightly identified that pupils' achievement in reading needs to be better. You also acknowledge that there is some variation in the teaching of writing. Both of these current priorities for improvement are being tackled with rigour.

You provide strong leadership and are very well supported by a highly capable and committed deputy headteacher. Collectively, you have communicated a clear vision and have high, yet realistic expectations about the school's future. Staff also know the direction of travel and are equally committed to making the necessary improvements for the benefit of the pupils. You have been successful in galvanising your team so that they feel motivated and are effective in their roles. Staff describe leaders as 'supportive and appreciative'. I fully agree with the comment from one member of staff who stated, 'This is a happy place with very diligent staff who do their best to help children enjoy and achieve.'

Dedicated governors play a pivotal role in supporting and challenging the school. They are champions for the pupils of Warstones and expect nothing less than the best from staff in enabling pupils to meet their needs. Governors are kept well informed through their own monitoring visits, supplemented by the useful information that leaders provide.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and benefit from the interesting curriculum on offer. They develop their skills, knowledge and understanding well through a broad range of subjects, enhanced by visits and visitors. The majority of pupils apply themselves well in lessons to make at least steady progress. This is because teaching is lively and engaging, and usually appropriately challenging. While you have worked hard to ensure that all teaching is of high quality, you acknowledge that there are still a few inconsistencies. These are diminishing because teachers benefit from the opportunities you provide to observe good practice and improve their subject knowledge.

Most parents hold the school in high regard and believe that teachers are doing a good job. They report that their children are happy and well taught at school. Parents also recognise the influence of leaders and say that they 'are doing an amazing job'. A minority of parents raised concerns about bullying. However, the inspection found that, while there have been some cases of bullying, these have been dealt with promptly and thoroughly by leaders, and brought to an appropriate conclusion. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that any bullying issues are usually addressed quickly.

Leaders have dealt effectively with the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The progress of higher-attaining pupils by the end of key stage 2 is broadly in line with the national average. This is because most teachers typically expect more of the most able pupils and set harder work. You have successfully introduced new approaches to ensure that parents are better informed about their children's progress. Almost all parents agreed with the statement 'I receive valuable information about my child's progress' on Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that keeping pupils safe from harm is a top priority for everyone in school. Staff are vigilant for any signs that a child may be at risk of harm. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders and governors invest time and resources to ensure that all staff have been appropriately trained in safeguarding matters. Staff understand what actions to take if they have concerns about a child, and act promptly when the need arises. Governors carry out their statutory responsibilities in relation to safeguarding well. For example, they check the school's records to ensure that all staff and volunteers have been properly vetted before they start working with children.

Pupils have a very good knowledge of how to keep safe. The prominent safeguarding displays around school provide pupils with essential information about

keeping safe and who are the trusted adults they can talk to. Pupils are aware of these display boards and say there is always someone to talk to in school if they have any worries or concerns. Leaders are focused on providing early help to families. For example, the recent establishment of the 'families at the front' room is an innovative approach which encourages parents to come together and give each other mutual support on a range of topics.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on four key lines of enquiry which we agreed at the start of the day. The first of these related to pupils' behaviour. I also considered teaching in the early years, how well reading and writing is being taught across the school, and the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- Reading is usually taught well throughout the school. The actions that leaders have taken to improve the teaching of reading have been successful. As a result, most of the current pupils are making good progress in reading. During guided reading sessions, teachers and other adults help pupils to improve their comprehension skills. Teachers use open-ended questioning well to extend pupils' understanding of challenging texts. For example, older pupils read a biographical piece of writing about the professional footballer Walter Tull. The teacher used the text to sensitively explore the theme of racism and also extended the pupils' vocabulary so they understood words such as 'gallantly' and 'battalion'.
- The teaching of writing is improving. Pupils write for a range of purposes and apply their writing skills well across the curriculum. Teachers demonstrate the writing process effectively and use engaging tasks to create interest. For example, Year 2 pupils confidently wrote a letter in the role of a character from Jacqueline Wilson's book, 'Cliffhanger'. They made effective use of classroom resources, such as prompt cards, to write with increasing independence. Handwriting is taught well and most pupils develop a neat, joined style of handwriting over time.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength in key stage 1 and pupils are particularly adept at applying their phonic skills to spell words correctly. However, there are weaknesses with spelling in key stage 2. Too many pupils do not yet demonstrate a secure knowledge of age-appropriate spelling patterns and misspell common words.
- Leaders acknowledge that a few teachers do not always have high enough expectations about what pupils should achieve in reading and writing. Consequently, sometimes the work provided is not challenging enough, especially for lower-attaining pupils in writing. This results in the progress of these pupils being slowed.
- The proportion of Reception children achieving a good level of development fell below the national average in 2016. Leaders have been quick to respond to this dip and put in place actions to rectify the fall in standards. Currently, children make good progress in the Reception classes, especially when working directly with adults. Children are eager to write and show that they are becoming

confident writers. For example, several children applied their phonic knowledge to carefully and accurately write the names of different minibeasts.

- Staff have created a calm and purposeful environment in the early years where children play, explore and learn together. They show good levels of involvement and concentrate well on tasks. Children behave well and cooperate with each other because staff have established good routines and clear expectations. They show enjoyment in learning and most make at least reasonable progress. However, sometimes activities do not present children with enough challenge or opportunities to think critically, and this limits the rate of children's progress, especially that of the most able. The new outdoor area is very popular with the children where they participate well in imaginative play and develop their vocabulary. For example, children excitedly talked about the pretend chocolate cakes they had 'baked' in the mud kitchen.
- The large majority of pupils behave very well in lessons and during less structured times such as when on the playground. They treat each other respectfully and play well together. Pupils understand the school's revised approach to managing behaviour because teachers are consistent in its application. As a result, pupils usually demonstrate the three key expectations of 'be safe, be responsible and be respectful'. There have been no recorded incidents of bullying or racism so far this year. Leaders are proactive in analysing behaviour incidents and making changes to practice as a result. These changes have contributed to a reduction in the number of behaviour incidents over time.
- You take a proactive approach to improving pupils' attendance and this is having a positive effect. Initiatives such as the weekly class attendance award and an opportunity for the class with the best attendance to keep the 'Warstones bear' for a week are popular with pupils. Overall current attendance is broadly similar to last year's and in line with the national figure. The absence rate of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving, although still remains slightly below the national figure.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the expectations of all teachers are consistently high to support better progress in reading and writing
- lower-attaining pupils are given the right level of challenge in writing so they achieve better outcomes
- the teaching of spelling in key stage 2 is improved
- teachers in the early years provide activities that offer a greater degree of challenge and encourage children to think critically.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held discussions with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss the school's self-evaluation summary and pupils' progress since the last inspection. We visited most classes to observe teaching and talk to pupils about their learning. I reviewed a wide selection of pupils' books. I met with a group of staff to discuss safeguarding. I also held a meeting with governors and a separate meeting with the local authority school improvement inspector.

I listened to pupils read during lessons and also had a discussion with a group of older pupils. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school development plan, governors' documentation and records about keeping pupils safe. The views of parents were considered through the 44 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as discussions with parents at the end of the school day. I also gathered the views of 20 staff through Ofsted's online staff survey.