

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 May 2017

Mr Rob Litten
Executive Headteacher
Park Lane Primary & Nursery School
Park Lane
Whittlesey
Peterborough
Cambridgeshire
PE7 1JB

Dear Mr Litten

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Park Lane Primary & Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 24 April 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure that newer leaders evaluate their actions more effectively so that they know, and can precisely explain, what difference their work is making to both pupils' achievement and school improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the executive deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, the pupil premium leader, the vice-chair of the governing body, and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Aspire Learning Trust. The focus of the discussions was around the actions since the previous inspection. You accompanied me on a tour of the school, making short visits to classrooms where we observed pupils undertaking a range of activities and we scrutinised examples of pupils' work in various curriculum subjects, including English and mathematics. I also evaluated a number of documents including the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation document, your updated information on pupils' attainment and progress, and the minutes of the latest meeting of the governing body.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the school staff have remained the same. You, along with the CEO, report that the school is in the most stable position it has been for some time.

The chair of the governing body resigned at the end of the spring term, but has remained as a governor. A new substantive chair will be elected at the next governing body meeting.

Main findings

You, with the effective support of the executive deputy headteacher and the trust, have relentlessly focused on the areas you were tasked with to improve in October 2016. Consequently, there has been rapid progress made in securing improvements at Park Lane. Leaders have undertaken much work that is making a difference to the effectiveness of the school. You rightly identify that the next step in your school's journey is to embed the work that has been achieved so far.

The school development plan has been amended in response to the findings of the previous inspection. As a result, it accurately focuses on the actions that leaders, the trust and the staff are taking to improve the school. The document is detailed, specific and clear about what the expectations and outcomes will be. It provides an effective, rigorous and shared direction for staff to follow on the school's mission to being judged a good school.

You have carefully considered the needs of the school and are investing in the staff so that they are all motivated to develop and improve their work. Staff say they appreciate the high-quality support and training they receive. You have set very clear, transparent expectations for what effective teaching should look like at Park Lane. You have nurtured teachers' development to help ensure that teaching meets the school's implemented high standards and requirements. Training, intensive support for identified staff, and the sharing of the stronger practice among staff are now improving the quality of teaching and learning. During our visits to classes, we saw teachers following your expectations far more consistently than had been the case at the time of the previous inspection. This is further verified in the pupils' behaviour, their books and the school environment.

The relatively new leaders are taking a proactive approach to addressing the improvement priorities identified by inspectors. Leaders are given the opportunity to work with the trust and an external consultant to develop their own skills and practice as leaders. While this is proving valuable and is adding capacity to the quality of leadership and management, the newer leaders tend to focus mainly on their actions. They have yet to evaluate strategically and effectively the impact of all they do so that they know precisely what difference this work is making to pupils' outcomes, and how well they contribute to the school's improvement.

You, alongside phase leaders, have refined your assessment systems to ensure that there is a greater level of accuracy and consistency among staff. Scrutiny of pupils' books shows that this work is leading to a greater degree of consistency and efficiency of feedback to pupils. This is resulting in swift progress being made from pupils' varying starting points, particularly notable in pupils' writing both in English lessons and across the curriculum.

Along with the executive deputy headteacher, you have set up an efficient, precise method for collecting and analysing information about pupils' achievement. This is enabling you to see the extent to which teaching across the school is helping pupils to reach and exceed the standards expected for their age in English and mathematics. The school's information indicates that achievement is improving rapidly. This has undergone rigorous checking processes both internally and from utilising external expertise, such as from the trust, the local authority and local schools. Where there are pupils who need to catch up, successful, appropriate support and intervention are focused on targeting their specific needs. Leaders are checking the impact of this work routinely.

Teachers' lesson planning has been sharpened to provide a clearer focus to the teaching of writing and, in particular, making sure that the development and application of key skills such as spelling, handwriting, grammar and punctuation are a priority. Displays of pupils' writing, and their books, demonstrate that pupils are becoming more proficient and accurate in their use of these skills in their independent writing.

The implementation and development of the school's chosen new curriculum has contributed towards re-invigorating teaching. The new curriculum is having a positive impact on pupils' quality of writing. Pupils are now receiving many opportunities to write in their English lessons and across other subject areas, where they are taught about the specific features of various types of writing considering the audience and purpose for their writing. There were many high-quality examples across the whole school including, for example, in science, explanation writing about how forces can change the state of materials; diary writing in role as a sailor within the 'Land ahoy' topic; and, in geography, information writing about Ordnance Survey maps, and how to understand and interpret the contour lines.

Leaders have successfully set very clear expectations of pupils' presentation and handwriting since the inspection. As a result, there was more evidence of a consistent approach to handwriting with pupils being taught to develop the school's chosen cursive handwriting script. Adults are now setting high standards and sharing these with pupils. These non-negotiable expectations are being securely implemented by adults and, consequently, presentation and the legibility and neatness of handwriting are improving considerably in every class.

The provision for disadvantaged pupils has further improved since the previous inspection. The pupil premium leader closely monitors disadvantaged pupils' progress effectively. The school's progress information and inspection evidence verify that disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are making better progress because teachers have carefully planned programmes of support that address their individual needs. Prior to accessing their classroom work, disadvantaged pupils also receive appropriate individualised one-to-one support that helps them to be 'ready to learn'. This is securing disadvantaged pupils' improved confidence and positive attitude towards school. Disadvantaged pupils are a main focus at the pupils' progress meetings, which ensures that their support is reviewed regularly, and consequently their rates of progress are increasing.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school. They undertake routine and purposeful visits closely aligned to the school's priorities. They have a secure awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are increasingly asking probing questions about pupils' outcomes in meetings and are keen to develop this further, particularly with regard to the progress and attainment information they receive.

During the spring term, the trust has carried out a full review of the school's website and amendments made to ensure that it meets the statutory requirements. You are currently launching a new website that is imminently due to 'go live'. This will further support you in sharing important information with parents and celebrating the improvements the school is making.

Safeguarding procedures continue to be effective. During the monitoring visit, you highlighted the additional work you have carried out to increase further the effectiveness and rigour of the systems and processes you have in place. Consequently, safeguarding remains a priority and pupils are well cared for and safe.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The Aspire Learning Trust and the external adviser provide effective support and rigorous challenge to school leaders. You use their regular and focused visits to the school to keep improving against the priorities identified in the school development plan.

Staff feel that their work with other schools and with external advisers is supporting them to be more consistent in their understanding of national expectations and assessments. This insightful guidance and focus on school improvement are beginning to ensure a more astute understanding among staff of what needs to be done, and how to make it happen.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding
Her Majesty's Inspector