

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 May 2017

Ms Sarah Lack
Executive Headteacher
New City Primary School
Tunmarsh Lane
Plaistow
London
E13 9NE

Dear Ms Lack

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to New City Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 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 May 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 recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to ensure that:

- pupils' writing in all curriculum subjects consistently reflects the standards of which they are capable
- handwriting is given due prominence in the curriculum and teachers provide pupils with clear guidance on how to develop their handwriting skills.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other leaders, including the interim headteacher and the associate headteacher. I also met with members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school's action plan. Together with the interim headteacher, I visited lessons and reviewed

work in pupils' books. I spoke to pupils during lessons and met with a group of pupils formally. A meeting was also held with teachers who are at the start of their teaching career. I considered a range of school documentation, including current assessment information, minutes of governing body meetings, the single central record of pre-employment checks on staff and other documentation related to safeguarding.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing. The majority of leaders and staff joined the school since September 2016. Shortly after the school was judged to require improvement, the governing body appointed you as executive headteacher, in addition to your role as the headteacher of an outstanding local primary school within the Boleyn Academy Trust. Other senior appointments included an associate headteacher and an interim headteacher. The governing body plans to appoint a permanent headteacher by the end of the academic year. Additionally, two deputy headteachers joined the school at the start of the summer term. The school has benefited from a partnership with the Boleyn Academy Trust in order to strengthen leadership capacity and the teaching staff.

Main findings

The new leadership team is successfully raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Leaders have transformed the culture of the school so that the needs of the pupils come first. Senior leaders are working with a sense of urgency to tackle the areas that need improvement. They have a clear vision for ensuring that all pupils receive the high-quality teaching they need to learn and achieve well. Leaders ensure that staff share their high expectations. Teachers are now more ambitious for pupils. As a result, teaching is becoming more challenging for all ability groups. Nevertheless, some variability is still evident in the quality of teaching and, as a consequence, rates of pupils' progress in key stage 2 are uneven.

Leaders, including governors, evaluate the impact of their work carefully. They have a thorough understanding of what is working well and where further action is needed. Senior leaders work alongside middle leaders to help them develop the skills they need to make a difference and raise standards. As a result, middle leaders contribute effectively to tackling the school's key priorities for improvement. For example, senior and middle leaders jointly monitor pupils' books and assessment information to check that their actions are helping to speed up pupils' progress.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced a more rigorous approach to checking pupils' achievement. Regular moderation with local schools helps teachers to make increasingly accurate assessments. Leaders are also holding teachers to account more closely for the impact they have on improving pupils' outcomes. For example, leaders meet teachers regularly to review assessment information. Pupils

who are at risk of underachievement are identified quickly. This includes disadvantaged pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils. Leaders help teachers to adapt and improve their teaching so that pupils receive the support they need to catch up. They recognise that there is still further work to do to ensure that all groups of pupils, particularly pupils in Year 4, make up for past underachievement. Nevertheless, school information and work in pupils' books suggest that pupils currently in Year 6, including those who are disadvantaged, are on track to achieve higher standards than previous cohorts.

Leaders provide high-quality guidance to help teachers to become more effective in the classroom. They have implemented procedures to develop a more consistent approach to teaching and learning across the school. Teachers explained confidently how they adapt these procedures to match their teaching to the needs of different ability groups. Teachers have frequent opportunities to share their practice and learn from each other. In many cases, leaders and teachers observe lessons jointly. This helps teachers to sharpen their understanding of how they can refine their teaching to help all pupils make good progress. So, too, do the opportunities they have to observe effective practice in two outstanding local primary schools. Leaders identify weaker teaching quickly. They act swiftly to provide the right balance of support and challenge to ensure that pupils' progress does not slow. Teachers new to the profession feel well supported. They appreciate the bespoke guidance and the help leaders provide and feel they are receiving the best possible start to their teaching career.

As a result of leaders' effective support, the quality of teaching is improving, particularly in key stage 2. The most effective teaching draws on strong subject knowledge to provide clear explanations using subject-specific vocabulary accurately.

The teaching of writing has improved in important respects. In English, teachers are now providing pupils with precise guidance so that they know how to be successful writers. This is evident, for example, in the way pupils were seen to edit their work to improve their punctuation, sentence structure and vocabulary choices. However, the quality of writing in other subjects is often lower than in English, even though pupils are given lots of opportunities for writing.

The majority of pupils take care in the presentation of their written work, but many in key stage 2 continue to struggle to form and join letters consistently, particularly when writing longer texts. Handwriting is given insufficient emphasis in the curriculum and teachers have not ensured that pupils use neat, fluent handwriting in all their subjects.

Leaders have introduced a new approach to teaching mathematics with the aim that pupils of all abilities should complete tasks which make them think hard. Pupils said that teachers now 'expect more' and always set challenging tasks 'to push us further'. Examples of more demanding tasks were evident in pupils' books. For

example, pupils regularly explain how they know an answer is correct, or they create their own mathematical problems. Nevertheless, the teaching of mathematics is not yet consistently strong in extending pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills.

Pupils are positive about the changes at the school, including the way reading is taught. They told me that they practise comprehension skills every day and have access to books which motivate them to read. Pupils appreciate the regular homework teachers set. They told me that it helps them to build on what they are learning in school. As one pupil put it, 'We do lots of hard work at this school.'

An external review of governance has sharpened the work of the governing body. Several new governors have been appointed, including a new chair and vice-chair of the governing body. As a result, governors have the necessary skills and experience to hold leaders to account rigorously. Governors have access to the right information and ask leaders challenging questions about what needs to be better. They visit the school regularly to see for themselves whether leaders' actions are securing swift improvements in teaching and pupils' outcomes.

External support

The local authority has brokered support from the Boleyn Academy Trust, which includes two outstanding primary schools. This support has been instrumental in securing improvements at the school. In particular, the partnership has ensured that skilled, experienced leaders are in place to ensure that the school is on the right path to providing a good or better standard of education.

An external review of the use of the pupil premium funding was recommended at the previous inspection. Although this has not taken place, leaders plan to commission a review by the end of the academic 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 Newham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Murphy-Dutton
Her Majesty's Inspector