

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



6 June 2017

Mr Robert Davies
Headteacher
St Stephen's Primary School
Church Lane
Fradley
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS13 8NL

Dear Mr Davies

Short inspection of St Stephen's Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 May 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, your deputy headteacher, senior leaders and governors have created a school in which pupils are happy and keen to learn. You provide effective leadership and have the respect of pupils, staff and parents. As a result, your staff and pupils are proud to be part of the school. Your leadership team supports you well and shows a determination to bring about further improvement. Governors have a range of expertise and are well informed. Since the last inspection, the governing body has been restructured and now provides more effective challenge to you and senior leaders to help ensure that standards are maintained.

You and your team have developed a bespoke curriculum for your school. Alongside the national curriculum, your pupils develop key skills, including problem solving, reasoning and communication. These skills enable your pupils to develop stamina and resilience, helping to make the school's motto, 'Think big and never give up', a reality.

Your pupils are well behaved and good ambassadors for the school. Older pupils speak positively about how the teachers help them to improve their work. They also value the range of trips and extra-curricular activities that they can access, and the opportunities they have to take on additional responsibilities. Parents are supportive and the great majority would recommend the school to others. As one parent said:

'My children go to school every morning with smiles on their faces. They love their school, teachers and have a happy, positive attitude to learning. St Stephen's offers everything a village school should.'

At your previous inspection, you were asked to improve pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain and further improve the quality of teaching. The school's work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, alongside the development of British values, is evident from a range of displays around the school and on your website. Pupils talk confidently about diversity and learning about other cultures and religions. Older pupils understand about democracy, voting and the workings of parliament. During a celebration assembly, pupils listened respectfully while teachers nominated pupils for 'star of the week' awards. Pupils happily congratulated those whose achievements were recognised.

In order to improve outcomes for pupils across the school, you have provided training for staff to raise their awareness of the increased level of expectation within the national curriculum. This has improved the quality of teaching across the school. You and your teachers now work more closely with other schools to learn from best practice. More pupils are now making secure progress across all year groups in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence seen during the inspection supports your view that this year more pupils are on track to attain both the expected and higher standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is an extensive culture of safeguarding within the school. You and your leadership team have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. As a result, pupils are well cared for at all times. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they are taught how to stay safe, for example when using the internet.

All staff have regular and appropriate training to understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Staff are clear about what they should do if they have any concerns. You have a good understanding of the specific safeguarding concerns that relate to the context of the school. You work with external agencies as necessary. Governors understand their role in overseeing the effectiveness of safeguarding. The chair of governors and the safeguarding link governor regularly monitor whether school procedures are being followed.

Inspection findings

- As pupils get older, the gaps in attainment between the small numbers of disadvantaged pupils and their peers diminish. In 2016, outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 were strong when compared to others nationally. You and your leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to address the needs of individual pupils. This may include one-to-one tuition or support for social and emotional needs.
- You and your leaders ensure that regular pupil progress meetings focus on

identifying the gaps in individual pupils' knowledge and what input is needed to help them move on. While assessment information is used to support these meetings, it is not yet used to inform leaders and governors about the progress of particular groups of pupils. As a result, leaders may not identify groups of pupils at risk of underachieving as quickly as they could.

- In 2015, outcomes in writing were disappointing and, as a result, you took decisive action to address this underperformance. You introduced a new scheme of work for writing, including grammar, punctuation and spelling. This has raised everyone's expectations and improved both the quality and the quantity of pupils' work. You and your staff have focused particularly on engaging boys with writing and all pupils now write regularly across a range of subjects. While there was some impact on 2016 outcomes, this approach is now fully in place across the school and rates of progress for current pupils have improved. You and your leaders are aware of the need to maintain this focus on writing and your middle leaders are looking at further developments for the coming year. The presentation of pupils' work across the school is good.
- To support developments in writing, you have also raised the profile of reading, including daily reading sessions in all classes. Online activities linked to reading are helping to develop a love of reading for all pupils, but especially among the boys. There is an increasingly consistent approach to teaching phonics across the early years and key stage 1. In Year 1, the majority of pupils are on track to reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check. Pupils use their phonics skill to decode unknown words and are developing understanding and fluency appropriate for their age and ability.
- Over the last year, teachers have started to give pupils more opportunities to apply their knowledge and to work at higher standards or at greater depth. For example, in mathematics, pupils can regularly choose from a range of activities in order to raise the level of challenge. In writing, pupils access different levels of support in order to complete tasks. These include teachers modelling good examples, providing additional prompts or setting 'stretch' targets. Pupils like having these clear targets and say that they help them to know how they can improve their work and 'see where I have gone wrong'. While these approaches are increasing the number of pupils working at the higher standards, more could be done to secure and develop this aspect of the school's work.
- As part of your drive to improve outcomes, you identified that middle-ability pupils in key stage 2 were not making as much progress in mathematics as they could. To address this, you introduced a daily session focusing on developing pupils' number work. As a result of this input, you have seen improved outcomes in termly mathematics tests. Pupils are now better prepared to solve more complex problems and they are more confident about explaining their reasoning.
- Last September, you appointed a new team of staff to work across the early years. All members of the team have high expectations of themselves and the children. Progress is now tracked more accurately and consistently through the use of online learning journals. There has been an increase in parental involvement through access to the learning journals and through parental workshops, for example focusing on phonics and numeracy. These changes have

been received positively by parents.

- Pupils' attendance improved in 2016 and the overall attendance rate was higher than the national average. However, despite improvement, the attendance for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was lower than the national average, while attendance for pupils eligible for free school meals was in the lowest 10% nationally. Where there are concerns about a pupil's attendance, you contact parents and, where appropriate, involve external agencies. These interventions usually have a positive impact on the pupil's attendance. The procedures you and your staff follow, including contacting parents on the first day of absence and working with the local authority, help to ensure that pupils are safe and not at risk of going missing from education. The actions you take, such as rewarding the class with the best attendance on a weekly basis, are well received and motivational for pupils. Attendance information for the current school year shows that, while the overall level of attendance remains high, more needs to be done to promote the importance of good attendance, especially for vulnerable pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- assessment information is used more effectively so that leaders and governors know how well groups of pupils are progressing
- teaching continues to challenge all pupils, especially the most able pupils, so that they achieve at the higher levels
- high levels of attendance are maintained for the majority of pupils and improved for pupils eligible for free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Crooks
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team. I spoke with members of staff, including some of your middle leaders and a newly qualified teacher. I also met with six governors, including the chair and vice-chair of governors, and I spoke to the school's external adviser by telephone. I talked with parents at the start of the day and with pupils both formally and informally.

Together we visited classes in all year groups where we observed teaching and learning, spoke to pupils and looked at the work in some books. I listened to some pupils read and I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. I scrutinised several documents, including your school self-evaluation, the school development plan and documents relating to safeguarding.

I took account of the 93 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 29 comments received electronically. I also took account of eight responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.