

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Jillian Shorrocks
Headteacher
Woodlea Junior School
Woodlea Road
Leyland
Lancashire
PR25 1JL

Dear Mrs Shorrocks

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woodlea Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 18 May 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 February 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in February 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- Accelerate rates of progress in mathematics, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, by ensuring that teaching is of a consistently good quality and provides all pupils with an appropriate degree of challenge.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior and middle leaders, the chair and four other members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority. You accompanied me on a series of short visits to classes, and I also

looked at work in pupils' books and the school's assessment information. I spoke informally with pupils throughout the day, and looked at parental responses to the online 'Parent View' survey from the current academic year. I also evaluated the school's action plan and scrutinised other key documentation.

Context

You took up your post in September 2015, shortly before the school's most recent inspection. Since then, there have been further significant changes in staffing and the great majority of current teachers have joined the school in the last 18 months. The staffing situation in the school is now more settled.

Main findings

It is clear that your calm and focused leadership has provided the school with the direction that it needed. You have an honest and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and your highly detailed school improvement planning maps a clear way forward. Staff, governors and parents are all fully supportive and the school is now well on the road to recovery.

A key factor in the improvements at Woodlea has been the successful development of leadership at all levels. Governance is now more effective. Governors have been thorough in their self-evaluation and, as a result, are developing their skills in using performance data and holding leaders to account. They know what the school needs to do to improve and, determinedly led by the new chair of governors, are now providing leaders with a good balance of support and challenge.

The work of middle leaders, including subject leaders, is also having a more positive impact on school improvement. Leaders have a better understanding of assessment data and ensure that they track the progress of specific groups of pupils, putting extra support in where it is needed. Leadership of provision for disadvantaged pupils, which was identified as an area for improvement in the last inspection, is also now stronger. The leader responsible has a clear vision, looking to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are given the support they need to be 'ready to learn' so that they can then achieve academically. The appointment of a dedicated family support worker has helped to ensure that vulnerable families and pupils are now receiving the additional help that they need.

Evidence in pupils' books and the school's tracking information shows that, while outcomes for disadvantaged pupils vary between cohorts, disadvantaged pupils at the lower end of the school are typically making good progress. This is because pupil premium funding is now being used more effectively. However, disadvantaged pupils in Years 5 and 6 still have more work to do to make up the ground they lost, particularly in mathematics, when provision was less effective.

Your actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school are

also having a positive impact. You and the governors have been rigorous in establishing your expectations for the quality of teaching in the school and eliminating any remaining ineffective teaching. Teachers have benefited from a good range of professional development opportunities, and recognise the benefits too of working with colleagues from other schools to identify and share effective practice.

Results in the 2016 key stage 2 assessments indicated that improvements had been made since the previous inspection, and that progress was accelerating towards the national average. Attainment in reading and writing was also closer to the average level than the previous year but attainment in mathematics was still well below average. The school's current assessment information, supported by work seen in pupils' books, shows that improvements are continuing and an increasing proportion of pupils across the school are working at the level expected for their age. However, progress in reading and writing is still typically stronger than in mathematics, indicating that there are still further improvements to be made.

The areas for improvement in teaching English identified by the previous inspection have been successfully tackled. Leaders altered the school's timetable to build in an additional session focusing on spelling, punctuation and grammar. This is backed up with a set of 'non-negotiables' that ensure that pupils understand the school's expectations for the accuracy of their work. Teachers take opportunities in lessons to remind pupils about aspects of grammar and punctuation, such as how and when to use inverted commas. Pupils' written work shows that this focus is working, and accuracy in writing is improving strongly.

Pupils' progress in reading and writing is also being accelerated through the use of a range of high-quality texts, which pupils told me they enjoyed reading. Year 6 pupils were seen enthusiastically discussing different characters in Macbeth, while one display showcased some good examples of writing inspired by Michael Morpurgo's novel 'Running wild'.

In mathematics, there are good examples of pupils being asked to apply their mathematical skills to help them solve written problems, and in some classes pupils are effectively encouraged to use their reasoning skills to explain the strategy they used. However, there are some inconsistencies that are slowing pupils' overall progress in mathematics. Currently, there is more evidence of problem-solving being developed regularly in Years 5 and 6 than in the two younger year groups. There are also differences between classes in the degree of challenge evident in pupils' work in mathematics. On occasions, the most able pupils are asked to do work that is too easy for them or are given 'challenges' that do not actually deepen or stretch their thinking.

The curriculum at Woodlea is now appropriately broad and balanced, developing pupils' skills and knowledge across a wide range of subjects. Special 'focus weeks', such as science week, further enhance the curriculum by providing pupils with the

chance to get more deeply and practically involved in a subject. The curriculum leader is knowledgeable and has a clear strategic vision for further developing and improving the school's curriculum offer. He provides good support for subject leaders, steadily improving their skills and increasing their effectiveness.

You have successfully created a happy and purposeful learning environment at Woodlea. Pupils display positive attitudes to learning and take pride in their work, which is well presented. They are well-mannered and friendly, and get on well together at breaktimes and around school. The school encourages pupils to develop the key skills and knowledge that they need to be good citizens through involvement in recycling projects, fair trade and charity fundraising. British values are also well promoted.

External support

Since the inspection in February 2016, the school has benefited from good-quality support from the local authority. This has included support for leaders and governors and work to help the school to improve teaching and learning in English and mathematics. Much of this support has been in the form of coaching, helping the school to develop the capacity to continue to move forward with increasingly less reliance on support from outside. The school also works effectively with other local schools. The local authority is confident in the ability of leaders, including governors, to continue to improve the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Neil Dixon
Her Majesty's Inspector