

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



3 July 2017

Mrs Suzanne Dawson
Headteacher
Saighton CofE Primary School
Saighton Lane
Saighton
Chester
Cheshire
CH3 6EG

Dear Mrs Dawson

Short inspection of Saughton CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since you took up post in September 2016, your calm and compassionate leadership has steered the school through the choppy waters of change. You have embraced opportunities to improve the school and your approach is getting the best out of your dedicated team of staff. Alongside governors, you have grasped the thorny issue of rationalising the school budget. However, some parents feel that communication regarding the necessary restructuring of classes could have been more detailed.

Leaders, including governors, have been active in promoting the school's vision. Governors are knowledgeable about the school. They have set high expectations of staff and are holding them to account for their performance. Recent appointments to the governing body have strengthened their roles and they question and support you in equal measure. As a result of their endeavours, current pupils are making good progress in their writing and mathematics.

Staff have excellent relationships with the pupils because they care about them. One parent describes the school as having 'a caring and nurturing ethos and supportive staff that have enabled my child to grow in confidence'. The inviting environment is clean and bright. Displays support pupils' learning and engaging activities ensure that they are on task. Pupils have a clear respect for staff that shines through in their responses and demeanour.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked the school to improve the achievement for the most able pupils in writing and mathematics. We agreed to address this in the key lines of enquiry for this inspection to explain some of the results that the school experienced in 2016. We decided to look at the actions leaders have taken to improve pupils' progress in mathematics, which last year was significantly lower than the national average by the end of key stage 2. We also agreed to look at how the school achieved high standards in writing at the end of key stage 2.

Another aspect the previous inspection asked the school to improve was to develop greater accuracy in the checks that teachers make to assess pupils. External moderation by the local authority in the last three years and inspection evidence both confirm that assessment in the school accurately reflects pupils' progress and achievements. The school has also addressed the quality of teaching to ensure that pupils make at least good progress in their work by providing staff with opportunities to develop their teaching skills as part of your ongoing training for staff.

Finally, as part of this inspection we agreed to explore why the results in the Year 1 phonics screening check have declined over the last three years.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils emphatically agree that they feel safe in school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and kept confidentially. Staff are vigilant to the signs of abuse. They receive regular updates in staff meetings and have received in-house training to ensure that they are up to date with current changes to legislation. Procedures are understood by staff and roles for safeguarding are well defined. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe because of the lessons that they have. The vast majority of parents agree. One parent commented that staff 'ensure that my son is well looked after without making a big issue of it. They listen to any concerns I have and work well with me to put my mind at rest.'

Inspection findings

- To address the first line of enquiry for this inspection, governors agreed that, prior to your arrival, the school had been too slow to address the rigour of the new mathematics curriculum. Due to this, gaps in pupils' learning emerged. Effective action has been taken in response to this. Pupils' arithmetic skills have improved greatly with the implementation of a new mathematics scheme. Reasoning skills are improving. However, this is at a slower rate. The work in pupils' mathematics books clearly shows problem-solving activities, but there is little evidence of pupils' reasoning to formally explain their answers. However, this was observed in some classroom activities where teachers deftly question pupils' understanding. Pupils identified that the school has focused on the language of mathematics. By using the correct terminology, this has improved the consistency of mathematical language that is used across the school. Pupils feel that this has enabled better transitions from one class to another and that this has contributed to their progress and development. Many pupils feel that their work challenges them but some of the most able pupils feel that their thinking could be stretched even further. The carefully selected scheme of work is enabling children

to take ownership of this by choosing their own level of challenge and by posing further questions when necessary. There is effective intervention for pupils who require support. This is immediate and pupils enjoy the individualised support and attention that they receive. Teachers' assessments of pupils' achievement match the progress in books. The result is that current pupils make good progress in their mathematics work from their starting points. Your clear evaluation of the school's strength and weaknesses has identified that further challenge to extend pupils' mathematical reasoning is an area for further development.

- For the second key line of enquiry, I looked at how successful pupils are at translating their understanding of grammar, spelling and punctuation into their writing. Pupils' written work shows that errors are addressed at the beginning of the year and that there is an improvement in spelling in their books. The new scheme introduced for spelling is removing the emphasis on pupils learning lists of words. Instead, the expectations of spelling are becoming an integral part of daily English lessons. The work in pupils' books is heavily moderated so that all staff have an understanding of the expectations for spelling, punctuation and grammar across the school. Their work is assessed accurately and pupils make good progress from their starting points. They have opportunities to write at length to practise their skills. Although leaders have a good understanding of their subject, they have not had the training or dedicated time for their role to fully have an impact on the development of their subject areas.
- Finally, I looked at why previous standards in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) show a downward trend in achievement. On closer analysis of the results, we agreed that this was due to a small number of pupils not achieving the expected standard each year. Pupils receive highly structured and effective teaching that probes their understanding of phonics. Pupils are grouped by ability and intervention has been put in place to support those at risk of not achieving the standard. This intervention has been highly successful. The most able pupils are clearly challenged in their work because of targeted and effective questioning. In the early years, children are engaged in their phonics because of the interesting and engaging tasks that they are given. The results of this are clear to see. Assessments show that all pupils have achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. More importantly, these lessons enable pupils to explore the relationships between alternative sounds with a smile on their face.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their reasoning skills in their mathematics lessons
- the most able pupils are challenged to achieve the highest standards by providing challenges in their mathematics work that stretch their thinking
- there is further development offered to middle leaders to enable them to increase the pace of improvement in their areas of responsibility
- there is clearer communication with parents about the decisions taken by leaders and governors.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Bentham
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

- During the inspection, I met with you and governors to discuss safeguarding and aspects of school leadership and management. I visited all classes to observe teaching and learning and spoke to pupils informally during lessons about their work. I heard pupils from Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6 read, as well as hearing pupils read their own work as part of their classroom activities. I reviewed safeguarding documentation, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. I watched pupils at playtime and reviewed safeguarding arrangements. I discussed a wide range of topics about school provision with pupils, both formally and informally. I conducted a scrutiny of key stage 2 pupils' writing and mathematics books. I reviewed documentation which included the monitoring of teaching and learning, the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan. I also took into account 32 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.