

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



18 October 2017

Mr Andrew Jenkins
Headteacher
Dovecote Primary and Nursery School
Greencroft
Clifton
Nottingham
Nottinghamshire
NG11 8EY

Dear Mr Jenkins

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dovecote Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 4 October 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in September 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 September 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 for the school to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the English coordinator, a group of pupils, the chair of the governing body and a representative of the Nottingham Schools Trust (the representative was previously employed by Nottingham local authority) to discuss the actions taken since the last monitoring visit. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I met with parents at the start of

the school day and read two emails from parents. I visited classrooms, looked at pupils' work and heard pupils read. I also reviewed information relating to safeguarding and attendance.

Context

At the first monitoring visit in February 2017, the school was judged not to be taking effective action. You were asked to improve the school improvement plan, raise standards in English and develop better links with parents so they can support their children's learning at home.

Since the previous monitoring visit in February 2017, the chair of the governing body has resigned. Four teachers have left the school. Four teachers and an unqualified teacher have been appointed.

Main findings

There is a noticeable improvement in the quality of leadership and teaching since my previous monitoring visit in February 2017. The school improvement plan sets out the right priorities to raise standards at the school. Each action point has specific criteria by which governors can judge if actions taken by leaders have been successful or not. Leaders have set high expectations for how well pupils can achieve. Consequently, teachers have also raised their expectations in lessons of what pupils can learn. Pupils are now making better progress and the school is improving rapidly.

You have implemented a comprehensive training programme for staff to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in English. Following the training, you have closely monitored the quality of teaching to check that it is improving pupils' work. If you and your leadership team have concerns over the quality of teaching, you are tackling the concerns promptly.

Your analysis of pupils' work shows that standards are rising. I agree. In addition, the provisional outcomes at the end of both key stages 1 and 2 in 2017 show a marked improvement in pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics. Furthermore, more pupils who did not achieve a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year have now reached the expected level of achievement by the end of Year 2 in 2017. This represents better progress through key stage 1.

You and your senior leaders have taken decisive action to improve the teaching of phonics to help pupils learn to read and spell. Teachers have received training on phonics and, as a result, the quality of teaching has improved. Pupils are much more focused in their lessons and are eager to practise their sounds. Adults take every opportunity to help pupils learn new sounds. For example, one group of pupils kept pronouncing the sound they had just learned as they walked down the corridor after their lesson had finished. Pupils work well together and listen to each other

read. Pupils' reading books are well matched to their abilities and they have the strategies to sound out unfamiliar words to help them learn to read new words. Teachers check the pupils' reading diaries to ensure that pupils are reading both at home and at school.

The English leader, as well as other senior leaders, regularly checks the quality of teaching of phonics to ensure that it is effective. Leaders recognise that while teaching of phonics has improved, it is not yet consistently good. Occasionally, there is some inconsistency in the school's approach to teaching phonics, which leads to pupils being confused, and this slows the pace of learning.

Pupils' ability to spell correctly is improving quickly. Teachers have received training on how to teach spelling. Pupils told the inspector how important it is to learn their spellings and how they want to get better. Close checking of pupils' work shows that on most occasions, pupils have corrected their spelling errors. Moreover, pupils are spelling more words correctly than previously in their written work.

The English leader has devised half-termly tests to assess pupils' ability to spell correctly words that they should know for their age. The tests also include other words that pupils are learning to spell in English lessons. When pupils were first tested on the spellings, the average score was very low across the school. However, there was a 100% improvement in the average score when pupils sat the second test six weeks later.

Pupils' writing skills are improving. The English leader has introduced a whole-school strategy of how to teach pupils to plan, edit and compose a piece of writing. Pupils could explain the strategy clearly. Pupils are writing more complex sentences and starting to use correctly a range of punctuation, including semi-colons. The English leader is checking pupils' work closely through the school to ensure that the strategy is being taught consistently well. Pupils in key stage 2 are using paragraphs, and their use of capital letters and full stops is mostly accurate. However, some pupils do not keep to the same style of writing, for example an informal or a formal style, throughout a piece of writing. Consequently, the writing sometimes does not read as well as it should.

The chair of the governing body has met with the English leader regularly to check on the progress the school is making. He has attended some of the English training for teachers and a curriculum workshop for parents. He has also reviewed pupils' work with the English leader. He is well informed about the progress the school is making. The governing body has now got a full complement of parent governors. Induction training has been booked to ensure that all governors can robustly check the school's work.

Leaders are working hard to better inform parents about what the pupils are learning at school. At the beginning of term, a pack was sent out to each parent to inform them of the expectations for reading, writing and mathematics for their child.

The school organised a parents' workshop to explain more about the curriculum. This was attended by 45 parents. The workshop was also streamed live on the internet for other parents who could not attend the meeting. Parents have enjoyed receiving more instant feedback about how well their child is doing, through a mobile messaging service. Parents have also commented that they feel more informed about how their child is learning to spell and how their children have enjoyed the reading challenges.

External support

The support of the adviser from the Nottingham Schools Trust has been very effective. He has worked closely with you to devise a school improvement plan which is sharply focused on the right things to improve the school. The adviser has also checked pupils' work and discussed the work with the pupils to check their understanding of what they have been learning. This work has ensured that raising standards has been at the heart of the school's work.

You and your leadership team have greatly valued the support from the Transform Teaching School Alliance. The subject leaders for English and mathematics have benefited from working with experienced leaders from other schools to develop their own leadership skills. Consequently, the strategies used to raise standards in English and mathematics are being consistently applied through the school.

Through the Transform Teaching School Alliance, you have also had the opportunity to moderate pupils' work with other schools to check that your assessments are accurate. Finally, teachers who are new to the profession have benefited from observing good practice at other schools. All these actions are helping to improve the quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch
Her Majesty's Inspector