

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



13 December 2017

Mr Bruce Fletcher
Headteacher
Foster's Primary School
Westbrooke Road
Welling
Kent
DA16 1PN

Dear Mr Fletcher

Short inspection of Foster's Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 November 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your reflective and humble leadership has been a catalyst in further strengthening the school. Senior and middle leaders demonstrate a highly accurate understanding of the school. You have enabled leaders to refine their skills and they are ambitious for the school's further improvement.

Since the last inspection, you have prioritised the development of a rich curriculum to support pupils' achievement of core skills. The school's cross-curricular approach is first-rate. High-quality reading texts form central 'hooks' to enable pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding. This provides pupils with a range of opportunities to use texts in reading to build on their skills in other subjects. For example, pupils use themes from books to explore related art topics. These enthuse pupils' learning and allow them to use their imagination to write high-quality pieces. As a result, pupils' attainment is high, particularly at the end of key stage 2.

You have empowered leaders to bring about secure improvements. Leaders are encouraged to use the latest research to inform their decisions on implementing change. For example, the school uses a new approach in mathematics effectively. Consequently, pupils' achievement at the end of key stage 2 in mathematics remains high. An assiduous literacy leader in key stage 2 has implemented a new approach to the teaching of reading. This is making a tangible difference to pupils' wider reading and writing skills. However, you recognise that pupils' progress in reading, particularly that of the most able, is not as strong as in other subjects.

Staff place a high importance on providing support for disadvantaged pupils. These pupils receive strong support from adults in their learning and welfare. As a result, disadvantaged pupils attain as highly as their peers. However, governors have not challenged leaders to ensure that funding for disadvantaged pupils rapidly accelerates their progress.

Leaders and staff demonstrate a strong moral purpose for pupils' well-being. Staff have high expectations of pupils and have excellent working relationships. This is demonstrated by pupils' exemplary behaviour. The appointment of a family liaison officer has been a success. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils' attendance has risen.

Governors are ambitious for the school. They work well with leaders and regularly visit to develop their understanding of the school. For example, during 'governor days', governors meet with pupils and visit lessons. Leaders provide governors with detailed reports about current priorities and progress information. Consequently, governors have a secure understanding of strengths and the implementation of current strategies. However, governors' strategic understanding of progress information and trends in the attendance of vulnerable groups is not as strong as it could be.

Staff are proud to work at the school and they put a great deal of trust in you as a long-serving headteacher. Parents are extremely supportive of your open-door policy and the opportunities they are given to engage with the school. Parents are complimentary about the school's caring ethos and supportive staff.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements in the school are robust. Pre-employment checks for staff are rigorous. You have an in-depth understanding of vulnerable pupils, and staff demonstrate a high level of vigilance to identify potential concerns. Training for staff reflects the latest safeguarding guidance including that on child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. Leaders are proactive in following up potential concerns with parents and liaise with external agencies effectively. Leaders' actions are detailed and well organised. You follow up with external agencies judiciously if you consider their responses to be too slow.

You ensure that pupils' safety is given a high priority. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught about the dangers of radicalisation, as part of their personal, social, health and economics education (PSHE) lessons. 'Keeping ourselves safe' assemblies further develop pupils' understanding. Pupils have a good knowledge of keeping safe online. Leaders check pupils' understanding of their own safety through questionnaires. Pupils told me that they feel very safe. The orderly and nurturing atmosphere around the school demonstrates the importance that adults give to pupils' well-being.

Inspection findings

- My first focus for the inspection was to review the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress in reading and writing. At the end of key stage 2 in 2017, disadvantaged pupils' progress in reading and writing was weaker than that of other pupils in the school and nationally.
- Disadvantaged pupils are well supported. Teachers plan very well for these children. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is checked by teachers and leaders regularly. This is reflected in detailed planning that is individualised to meet the needs of most of these pupils.
- Teachers know disadvantaged pupils very well. They provide focused support in class through small groups. Teaching assistants ask probing questions to encourage pupils to develop their understanding further. In key stage 1, additional adults provide less-able pupils with strong support, particularly in using their phonics skills to read and write. Graduate tutors work well with disadvantaged pupils to provide additional support. As a result, pupils work independently and engage enthusiastically with work that is suitably challenging.
- Strong teaching and a culture of support mean that disadvantaged pupils attain very well, in line with other pupils in the school. There is little difference in the proportions of disadvantaged pupils reaching age-related expectations compared with their peers.
- Leaders check disadvantaged pupils' progress effectively at different points throughout the year. However, leaders have a limited understanding of the progress that these pupils make from their different starting points. In particular, the most able disadvantaged pupils receive targets that are not always sufficiently challenging. Governors' understanding of the difference that leaders' actions make to these pupils' progress is not as secure as it could be. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' progress is not as strong as that of other pupils in the school.
- Another focus of the inspection was how leaders are improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and reducing their persistent absence. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance has been well below the national average for the last two years.
- Leaders have introduced several initiatives to support disadvantaged pupils' attendance. In particular, the employment of a family liaison officer has been highly effective. She has worked diligently to act as a bridge between the school, external agencies and parents. She uses attendance information to meet with individual families and develop a strong awareness of potential barriers to pupils' attendance. She successfully works with a range of external services to provide targeted support where required. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' attendance has risen significantly. It is now similar to the national average.
- My last area of focus was how leaders ensure that the most able pupils make accelerated progress across the curriculum in reading and writing, particularly at the end of key stage 2. Higher-ability pupils' progress in writing has steadily

declined over the last three years. In reading, at the end of key stage 2, progress has remained static. At the end of key stage 1 in 2017, the most able pupils' progress was not as high as that of similar pupils nationally.

- Leaders' use of a well-thought-out curriculum is at the core of developing pupils' reading and writing skills. Pupils benefit significantly from a well-embedded cross-curricular approach to learning the different subjects. Pupils engage enthusiastically with reading texts, which enable them to write at length across a range of styles. Writing is to a high standard, and pupils use sophisticated language and compose paragraphs well. Pupils respond well to teachers' guidance on improving their writing further and they make good progress.
- Pupils have developed a love of reading. Teachers encourage the most able pupils to discuss their work and they do so in an articulate and self-assured manner. Teachers' strong questioning enables pupils to use challenging texts to develop their inference skills in upper key stage 2. However, these are not as widely used in key stage 1 or lower key stage 2. As a result, the most able pupils in these year groups receive work which is not as challenging as it could be, particularly in the development of their inference skills. Guidance for the higher-ability pupils in reading is not as strong as it is in writing. As a result, the most able pupils are not encouraged to refine their answers to be concise – a skill required to achieve the higher standards.
- Leaders recognise that the progress of the most able pupils, particularly in reading, has plateaued over the last couple of years. Regular meetings with leaders and teachers ensure that pupils receive targets for the end of the year. However, some of the targets do not reflect the progress that these pupils can make from their higher starting points. Progress information from leaders suggests that few pupils make accelerated progress from their starting points until the end of key stage 2.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress and attainment of the most able and disadvantaged pupils, particularly in reading, continues to rise by:
 - setting pupils challenging targets that reflect their starting points
 - providing the most able pupils with opportunities to refine their answers, so they can further develop their inference skills
 - ensuring that governors develop their understanding of key information so they can effectively challenge leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Noeman Anwar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I had discussions with senior and middle leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions. Visits to classes took place alongside leaders, including a review of pupils' work. I scrutinised a range of documents provided by leaders, including progress information, rates of attendance and the use of pupil premium funding. I checked the school's procedures for safeguarding, including the single central record and documents related to safeguarding referrals. I met with a member of the local authority and governors. I spoke to a parent on the telephone and considered the 30 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and one letter from a parent. The 85 responses to the pupil survey and 31 responses to the staff survey were also taken into account.