

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 February 2018

Mrs Karen Jaeggi
Starks Field Primary School
167 Church Street
Edmonton
Enfield
N9 9SJ

Dear Mrs Jaeggi

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Starks Field Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 February 2018, 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- build on the improvements made to the quality of teaching so that pupils' progress over time is consistently strong.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the senior leadership team, middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's improvement action plan was evaluated and information on pupils' achievement was reviewed. The inspector visited classes in all key stages jointly with senior leaders. A range of subjects was observed, including English, mathematics, history and music.

The inspector also heard Year 2 and Year 6 pupils read, reviewed their work and talked to them about their experiences at the school.

Context

Since the previous inspection, staffing has been stable. New subject leaders have been appointed with responsibility for the creative arts, computing and physical education. A new chair of the governing body took up post in September 2017.

Main findings

The leadership team has maintained the momentum for improvement identified at the previous section 5 inspection. Crucially, leaders have taken effective steps to reduce the variability in the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in all subjects. Through the 'Starks Field Steps', staff now share a consistent understanding of how leaders expect them to promote good gains in pupils' learning. Teachers also have higher expectations of what pupils can do. This is evident in the displays around the school and the work in pupils' books. Pupils explained that lessons are 'more challenging' and that teachers 'encourage them to push themselves'. As a result, standards are rising and pupils are making better progress than in the past. In the 2017 key stage 2 statutory assessments, the progress of the Year 6 cohort was broadly similar to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is the first time this has been the case in the last three years.

While pupils' progress is undoubtedly improving, some pupils still have some way to go before they are working at the standard expected for their age. Leaders are acutely aware of this. They are aspirational for pupils' outcomes and are determined that the quality of teaching is good enough to address the legacy of underachievement. Their work is underpinned by a thorough and systematic approach to evaluating the school's performance. When they identify concerns, leaders waste no time in adapting their actions to ensure that the momentum for improvement does not stall.

Middle leaders are playing an increasingly effective role in improving pupils' outcomes, particularly in the wider curriculum. In September 2017, they introduced a new approach for measuring pupils' progress in subjects such as art, history and geography. Together with senior leaders, they are using this information to focus their actions on the areas in need of most attention. For example, they are delivering effective training for teachers to make sure that art teaching gives due emphasis to subject-related skills and knowledge.

As at the time of the previous inspection, the governing body provide well-focused support and challenge. Their strategic decision-making is providing a basis for future development, for example in leadership succession planning. The appointment of a new chair of the governing body has strengthened governance further. Governors have recently reviewed their roles to maximise how they deploy their respective

expertise. This is sharpening the way in which they hold leaders to account. Equally, through their regular visits to the school, which include meetings with leaders and pupils, they obtain the information they need to challenge leaders on what needs to be better.

Across the curriculum, teaching is more effectively targeted to pupils' needs and starting points than has previously been the case. Typically, teachers ensure that pupils' understanding is secure before they move on to harder work or new concepts. Gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge are diminishing. For example, in writing, teachers are quick to spot and correct pupils' spelling or punctuation errors. However, the legacy of weak teaching of handwriting skills means some older pupils still struggle to form and join letters correctly. Nonetheless, standards in writing are rising. Teachers expect more from pupils and are becoming more adept at planning tasks that challenge pupils to produce writing at age-related expectations.

In mathematics teaching, greater emphasis is being given to reasoning activities which deepen pupils' understanding of key concepts. For example, pupils have to explain how they worked out an answer and how they know it is correct. This approach is proving particularly effective in improving the achievement of the most able pupils. In the 2017 key stage 1 assessments, the proportion of pupils attaining the highest standard was above the national average.

Throughout the school, a higher than typical number of pupils join part-way through an academic year. Many pupils have not attended school before and are at the early stages of speaking English. These pupils benefit from well-planned extra help, particularly with their language skills and personal development, and, consequently, get off to a smooth start to their time at Starks Field.

In the past, lower-attaining pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities did not routinely receive the support they needed to make good gains in their skills and knowledge. Through stronger partnerships with families and external agencies, leaders ensure that these pupils' barriers to learning are now identified and assessed accurately. This means that teachers and teaching assistants know what they need to do to help these pupils learn well. An increasing proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making the progress leaders expect. While this is an important step forward, further work is needed to embed these improvements so they have a sustained impact on pupils' outcomes over time.

The previous inspection identified that the school's approach to the teaching of reading was inconsistent. Leaders are tackling this effectively, in part because pupils now receive a secure grounding in their early reading skills. The proportion of pupils reaching age-expected standards in the Year 1 phonics check has risen considerably over the last three years and is now just below the national average. Adults are typically skilled in helping younger pupils to become accurate and fluent readers. They praise pupils' efforts and guide them to use their phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words. This builds pupils' confidence as readers and motivates them to try

hard. Pupils who have fallen behind are not overlooked. Daily small-group reading sessions help to plug gaps in pupils' knowledge. However, the progress of some younger pupils is hampered because they are not routinely practising their reading skills outside school. This is not the case for pupils in key stage 2, who were positive about the ways teachers encourage them to read widely and regularly. They particularly appreciate how teachers help them to explore different genres and find books that appeal to their interests. As one pupil put: 'Before, we read because teachers said we had to; now, we read because we want to.' Pupils' enjoyment of reading is complemented by effective teaching of reading comprehension skills, such as scanning for key information or using clues in the text to work out its meaning. The positive impact of the school's work in this area is evident in the 2017 key stage 2 reading assessments. Although pupils' attainment remained below the national average, it rose considerably when compared to the standards attained by previous Year 6 cohorts.

Leaders have ensured that teachers' high expectations extend to subjects other than English and mathematics. The quality of pupils' learning in subjects such as history, science, art and music is improving because pupils are now explicitly taught subject-specific skills and knowledge. For example, pupils told me that in art, lessons used to focus 'only on drawing', whereas now they explore the work of different artists and try out different techniques. This was evident in pupils' sketchbooks. For example, pupils used their study of a well-known artist as a stimulus for their own artwork, which included experimenting with different materials and evaluating how the composition made them feel. Improvements to the wider curriculum are also having a positive impact on pupils' writing outcomes. Teachers plan meaningful opportunities for pupils to write at length, while ensuring that the focus on subject-specific skills and knowledge is not lost. In history, for example, Year 6 pupils produced well-organised and detailed writing to explain the reasons for the Second World War, drawing effectively on their knowledge of historical events.

Leaders are taking effective steps to improve the early years provision so that children are well prepared for Year 1. Well-chosen resources and activities promote children's understanding of number as well as their early reading and writing skills, such as phonics and letter formation. Leaders have placed children's language and communication skills at the heart of the early years provision. However, when questioning children, sometimes adults are too quick to provide them with the answers. This means that children do not think as deeply as they could about what they are learning or exploring.

The previous inspection noted that leaders made effective use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. This continues to be the case. Work in pupils' books and school assessment information indicate that the majority of the current disadvantaged pupils are making the progress leaders expect. Leaders are rightly focusing on ensuring that these pupils make excellent gains in their learning and attain age-related expectations. To support this aim, leaders work in effective partnership with families and external agencies to ensure that disadvantaged pupils

attend school as regularly as they should. The attendance of this group is now in line with other pupils within the school and just below the national average.

In their efforts to raise standards, leaders have not lost sight of the importance of promoting pupils' safety and well-being. Leaders give careful consideration to how best to support pupils to understand and minimise the risks they may face outside school, including those pertaining to knife crime and gang culture.

External support

While the local authority has great confidence in leaders' actions, it is not complacent. Through regular 'rapid recovery meetings', the local authority challenges and supports leaders in equal measure. Importantly, these meetings have enabled governors to interpret the information they have about the school and prioritise further actions.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Murphy-Dutton
Her Majesty's Inspector