

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Machaela Heavens  
Headteacher  
Cavendish Primary School  
Cavendish Road  
Hull  
HU8 0JU

Dear Mrs Heavens

### **Short inspection of Cavendish Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 2018, 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 July 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You and other school leaders are aware that challenges with staffing and recruitment have had an impact on pupils' standards over time. You know that outcomes for pupils have not been strong enough in reading and writing. However, pupils' attainment in mathematics at the end of Year 6 has improved.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve the overall effectiveness of teaching and thereby raise achievement. The deputy headteacher and eight teachers are new to the school since the last inspection. You are confident that the school is now in a better position to address any aspects of underperformance. Your self-evaluation of the school, highlighting that pupils' outcomes need improvement, matches my own. However, we are in agreement that some of the more recent strategies put in place by leaders, for example those to improve phonics, are starting to have a positive effect.

Most parents and carers have a positive view of the school. They value the extra-curricular activities their children can take part in and the contact the school makes with them through emails and letters. Many say that their children are happy at school. Some parents who have brought a concern to the attention of school leaders say that it has been addressed quickly and successfully. Pupils have good attitudes to learning in class and are eager to talk about the aspects of school they enjoy most, such as the different clubs on offer and the shared reading of class texts.

Much of my work during the inspection was focused on pupils' progress in phonics and reading. Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 has been below the national average in recent years. The progress that pupils made in reading in Year 6 in 2016 and 2017 was in the lowest 20% nationally. Leaders have a clear understanding of the improvements that are needed in reading and have recently put a number of well-evaluated strategies in place to support this improvement. As some of these initiatives started in January this year, it is too soon to see an impact on pupils' outcomes. Pupils say that adults encourage them to read to themselves in class and in reading zones at breaktimes. It is clear that reading comprehension work is more frequent and focused. Pupils' books shows that their learning is now more age-appropriate and that productivity in lessons is improving. However, leaders say that they have needed to focus on supporting teachers in confidently matching their teaching to age-related expectations. As a result, leaders agree that higher-ability pupils are not always given work that challenges and extends their learning.

In early years, adults make sure that children get off to a swift start with their early literacy skills. Phonics teaching starts promptly in the school year and the skills children develop are now carefully built upon in key stage 1. Making sure that activities in Year 1 build on what pupils have learned in the early years was identified as an area for improvement in the last inspection. Children have frequent opportunities to test out their reading and writing skills because adults skilfully incorporate writing activities into other subjects and areas of the classroom, such as the construction area. For example, during my visit, children were designing an imaginary place, drawing and building castles on large sheets of paper. They added words and sentences around the buildings. One child wrote the names of the model queen and princess she was holding, using phonics to sound out the words. The adult with the group praised this work and moved it on by reminding the child about 'the special friend' that is written with 'q'. The child then confidently corrected her work from 'qeen' to 'queen'.

Leaders recognised that outcomes in phonics were not strong enough and put a new programme and staff training in place to secure improvement. As a result, standards have risen steadily over the last three years and are now similar to the national average. All staff model sounds accurately and have established routines that pupils feel comfortable with and successful in. Pupils' written work shows recent evidence of pupils' good application of these skills into their writing.

Teachers in key stage 1 give strong guidance and direction to pupils in immediately transferring their reading skills into writing. Pupils use their phonics to write new words, and adults set clear non-negotiables and high expectations in pupils' spelling. Adults identify, and help rectify, any misconceptions in pupils' work, and make sure that pupils have opportunities to write widely across the curriculum.

Leaders are aware that some groups of pupils made slow progress in reading and writing last year. Pupils' work in some classes and school assessment information show that a considerable number of pupils were working below age-related expectations at the beginning of this academic year. Leaders have taken action to

address this, and the pace of progress for most of these pupils has been recently accelerated. However, some inconsistencies remain, including in teachers' expectations of how pupils present their work and in what pupils can achieve. Leaders' direction to teachers to show pupils how to edit and improve their work is not applied consistently in all classes.

Your own school assessment information tells you that a high proportion of pupils are working below age-related expectations across subjects in some year groups. The information suggests that pupils' progress has slowed or stalled. You say that you are confident that, in most cases, this is due to teachers being overcautious in their assessments. We agreed that more work needs to be done on checking the accuracy of teachers' judgements and continuing to match this with work in pupils' books and in lessons. You agree that this will give leaders a more accurate picture of where any gaps in learning need quickly addressing.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The recruitment and induction processes for new staff include high-profile safeguarding questions and information. There are strong procedures for ensuring that volunteers have appropriate checks and information before they start working in school. Leaders make sure that staff training is up to date and that there are regular, timely reminders about the policies and systems in place, for example whistle-blowing procedures.

Records relating to safeguarding are comprehensive and overseen by the designated safeguarding leader. Leaders have plans under way to introduce an electronic record-keeping system in the autumn term to further strengthen this work.

Leaders have put in place support to ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families are met. The child and family support officer has a wealth of experience and skills to support pupils with different needs and in different circumstances.

Pupil school councillors are proud of their work on their 'STOP' campaign to raise awareness and understanding of bullying. This has included school councillors leading assemblies and class sessions for other pupils. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that this work has really helped them to know what to do if they or others are being bullied.

### **Inspection findings**

- Different leaders throughout the inspection said that they have felt 'in limbo' during the transition to become part of a multi-academy trust. School leaders still liaise effectively with the local authority standards and effectiveness partner, for example to ensure that they have an accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning in early years. However, governors and school leaders feel that other support is limited.

- Governors have made carefully considered decisions about the future of the school and have plans well under way for the school to become part of a multi-academy trust. They know that they need to increase the overall capacity for improvement, in terms of support, validation of school leaders' work, challenge and direction. Currently, governors do not have a clear enough understanding of the reasons for lower pupil outcomes. Because they are not sure about how to interpret the school's own assessment information, they have not identified that this information highlights that some groups and classes of pupils are underperforming. They are therefore not clear about whether or not the actions leaders are taking, for example to improve reading, are successful.
- Although there have been delays in the school's move to join a trust, you have been proactive in starting to work with trust leaders on the systems and strategies that they have in place to support school improvement. You are establishing an understanding of the methods that the trust employs to check and evaluate improvement. For example, you have discussed how the trust schools improve attendance. You have started to make more thorough checks on pupils' attendance to direct your work with pupils and their families as a result.
- Pupils' attendance has declined over the last four years to below the national average. The school is taking action to decrease rates of absence. The school office staff and the child and family support officer follow up daily absences and lateness carefully. This has resulted in some positive improvements for specific pupils. However, leaders agree that further work needs to take place, particularly with pupils who are persistently absent from school and their families.
- Pupils' outcomes in mathematics are improving. You explain that this is a result of the focused direction leaders have given to teachers in encouraging pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills. There has been a stronger focus on pupils giving reasons for their answers, and pupils show increased confidence in this area.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of reading is consistently good, with all teachers having high expectations of the quality of pupils' work and showing pupils how to edit and improve their written work
- work is carefully matched to the needs of middle- and higher-ability pupils in reading, so that they deepen their understanding and a larger proportion reach higher standards
- teachers are supported in making accurate judgements of pupils' attainment against age-related expectations throughout the year, so that assessment information is more reliable and more accurately identifies where strengths and weaknesses lie
- they continue to seek a sustainable external partnership for the school, so that leaders and governors have appropriate support and challenge in improving the school

- governance is improved so that governors have a clear understanding of where the strengths and weaknesses lie in the actions that leaders are taking to bring about improvement
- further strategies are put in place to work with pupils and their families to reduce the level of persistent absence.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Rowley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this one-day inspection, you and I spent time together in classrooms and looking at the quality of pupils' work. Some of this work was done with the deputy headteacher. Much of this was focused on reading and phonics. We discussed leaders' evaluations of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. We looked at the success of the actions that leaders have taken. I held discussions with five members of your governing body and had a separate meeting with the local authority standards and effectiveness partner. I met with leaders for English and the child and family support officer, as well as the school business manager. I spoke to pupils about their learning and looked through their work. I listened to pupils read. I considered parents' views by speaking to parents and taking into account the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The responses from members of staff to the Ofsted questionnaire were also considered. I reviewed a number of school documents, including the written evaluation of the school's work, documents relating to checks on the quality of teaching and learning, school assessment information, a range of policies and safeguarding information.