

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



29 March 2018

Mrs Gail Newton
Executive Headteacher
Linthwaite Clough J I & Early Years Unit
Chapel Hill
Linthwaite
Huddersfield
West Yorkshire
HD7 5NJ

Dear Mrs Newton

Short inspection of Linthwaite Clough J I & Early Years Unit

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have a clear vision for your school which puts pupils at the heart of everything you do. All members of staff support this vision and it can be felt when walking around the school. Well supported by your deputy headteacher, you strive to improve pupils' knowledge and skills to ensure that their future opportunities will be limitless. Since federating with another local school, you and your governing body have worked hard to continue to improve many aspects of the school's work.

Linthwaite Clough Junior, Infant & Early Years Unit is a vibrant, creative school with pupils who are polite, well mannered and friendly. Pupils are able to communicate and express themselves confidently. The memorable curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to reflect and express their feelings through a variety of different media. For example, the emotion conveyed through dance, which reflected the work pupils had done on the conflict in Syria, was breathtaking. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils are well behaved and motivated to learn. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school, with one parent saying she had moved house to come here. Another parent told me, 'I cannot praise the school enough because every child counts and is made to feel like they're worth something. The headteacher runs the school brilliantly and I couldn't wish for my children to go anywhere else.'

Since you federated, you have worked hard to develop the skills of middle leaders

to make sure that the standard of education continues to improve. Leaders know pupils well and use individual attainment information to set appropriate targets. They then, alongside you and other senior leaders, hold staff to account for the progress of all pupils.

You use published data to set the correct priorities for further development. Leaders assist teachers in improving outcomes by identifying the key issues, researching best practice and then communicating this throughout school. Leaders recognise that, while the teaching of reading in key stage 2 and the teaching of mathematics for the most able pupils in key stage 1 have improved, there is more to be done.

Governance is effective. Governors visit regularly. They offer support where appropriate and they have a good understanding about the school's performance. Governors use their expertise effectively. They ask challenging questions to ensure that leaders direct resources effectively to secure further improvement. Governors report regularly to parents and invite them to annual meetings as they seek out ways to improve.

At the time of the previous inspection, inspectors asked you to make sure that work was well matched to pupils' needs, particularly in writing and mathematics, and to refine how pupils' progress is checked. You have responded well. Through looking at pupils' books, it is clear that you now ensure that work is suitable for all pupils. Your approach to individual pupil tracking ensures that staff know the needs of their pupils and are regularly held to account for their progress. Consequently, attainment and progress in writing and mathematics have improved by the end of key stage 2.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is an established culture of safeguarding at the school and there is a clear ethos that everybody is responsible for safeguarding. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders have ensured that all members of staff and governors are regularly trained in different aspects of safeguarding. Leaders and governors ensure that relevant checks on visitors and staff are carried out before they enter or join the school.

You know the families of pupils very well and are vigilant about pupils' welfare, especially any whose circumstances make them vulnerable. You work closely with local agencies to ensure that pupils receive the care and support that they need. Attendance of pupils is regularly analysed and checks are made to ensure that all pupils are safe.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school and parents agreed. Pupils could talk extensively about the 'Clough Code' where they are encouraged to 'be themselves, respect everyone and consider others'. Pupils said that bullying is rare but were confident that, if it happens, an adult would stop it immediately. Pupils are aware of how to stay safe online.

Inspection findings

- As part of the inspection, I looked at how effectively leaders have improved progress in reading throughout key stage 2, especially for boys. This is because, in 2017, progress in reading was weaker than in writing and mathematics. Leaders accurately identified that teaching higher-order reading skills, such as inference and making predictions, were weak across school. The implementation of a new strategy is ensuring that these areas are now taught during reading sessions. However, we agreed that more work still needs to be done.
- Boys are motivated to read through, for example, accessing texts about football and fantasy. Teachers target boys in lessons with rich questioning to deepen their understanding and sit them together to build their confidence. Boys read fluently and with expression and intonation. Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide effective levels of challenge for boys. Boys are now making better progress.
- I also looked at how effectively teachers challenge the most able pupils across school. This is because not as many pupils attain higher standards as seen nationally. In early years, children are well challenged. Staff know the children well and ask probing questions to develop their knowledge and skills. Well-planned activities allow children to consolidate their understanding and apply their learning. Assessment information shows that a greater number of pupils are likely to exceed the early learning goals than last year.
- In mathematics in key stage 1, evidence in books shows that the most able pupils are not always moved on quickly enough to ensure that they are challenged throughout the lesson. Opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts through reasoning and problem-solving are not often evident.
- The most able pupils in key stage 2 are making good progress in writing. Pupils' books show that sentence structure, vocabulary and pupils' use of grammar have improved since the start of the year. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and pupils are given opportunities to apply newly taught skills to their writing. Assessment information shows that a higher proportion of the most able pupils are on course to attain higher standards at the end of this year.
- I also looked at the effectiveness of phonics teaching in Year 1. This is because the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard had fallen in 2017. Phonics teaching is creative and engaging. Pupils are able to practise sounding-out words using matching games, talking games and noughts and crosses. Work is well matched to pupils' ability and adults' subject knowledge is good.
- My final line of enquiry was to look at how effective assessment systems are at identifying underperformance in pupils. This is because it was an area for improvement from the last inspection. Individual pupil data is well used. Pupils are assessed to provide a baseline and then set clear targets. These are monitored and tracked frequently and staff are held accountable for pupils' progress. However, we agreed that systems need to be further developed to ensure that the underperformance of groups of pupils can be swiftly identified.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan more regular opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills through solving problems or reasoning
- the teaching of higher-order reading skills continues to be developed
- tracking systems are developed to identify the underperformance of groups.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon McCarthy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and your leadership team, 12 parents, two members of the governing body, including the chair, and two local authority learning partners. I held meetings with the school's leaders for mathematics and English and early years. I talked with small groups of pupils during lessons and informally during lunchtime. Along with you, I visited classes to observe teaching and learning across the school and I scrutinised the work in pupils' books. I listened to six pupils read individually.

I examined a range of documentation, including that relating to attendance and safeguarding. I took account of the minutes of the governing body meetings, the school's evaluation of how well it is doing, improvement priorities, assessment information and the pupil-premium action plan. I reviewed the school's website. I considered the responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for staff and pupils.