

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



3 May 2018

Mrs Fay Walton
Headteacher
Whaley Bridge Primary School
Buxton Road
Whaley Bridge
High Peak
Derbyshire
SK23 7XH

Dear Mrs Walton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Whaley Bridge Primary School

Following my visit to your school 18 April 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 two 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 good.

The school should take further action to:

- embed strategies already in place to improve outcomes for pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other leaders, a group of staff and members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated and I looked at minutes of meetings of senior leaders and the governing body. A telephone discussion was held with a local authority adviser. I also met with a group of pupils to gather their views.

During the inspection, the Year 2 class was participating in a visit off-site. You and I visited all other classes, including the enhanced resource base, and discussed the learning observed. I also looked at a sample of pupils' books from different year groups to evaluate the quality of pupils' learning over time. I looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes to staffing, including within the leadership team. The key stage 1 leader and a key stage 2 teacher have left the school. Three staff, including the literacy leader, are currently on maternity leave. A newly qualified teacher (NQT) joined the school in October 2017.

Main findings

You are extremely committed to the school and hold the interests of pupils at the heart of all you do. You have shared high expectations of pupils and staff and created a culture where all feel inspired to bring about the necessary improvements. Following the last inspection, you took immediate action to work with staff and governors to write a clear and precise action plan to tackle the areas identified as needing improvement with purpose and urgency. You are highly reflective and regularly evaluate the impact of the school's work. This means that plans are adapted in a timely manner. Therefore, staff remain focused on key priorities.

You have ensured that morale remains high by establishing a culture of determination and belief. You worked with pupils, parents, carers and staff to create a new vision for the school which is encapsulated in the 'every child a chance to shine' motto. The vision permeates all aspects of school life. It is reflected in staff and pupils' attitudes and in their approach to all that they do.

Much work has been undertaken to improve leadership. You have recognised the need to devolve leadership responsibilities throughout the school. You have clarified roles and responsibilities for each aspect of the school's work. You have supported other leaders, including middle leaders, to take greater ownership for leading improvements in their areas of responsibility. You provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge. This, alongside high expectations, has created a sense of empowerment and confidence among leaders at all levels. You have increased the rigour with which you monitor the school's work. For example, you have increased the degree to which staff are held accountable for pupils' progress through probing pupil progress meetings. There is a strong sense of purpose in all activities. Capacity for further improvement is strong.

The school is warm, welcoming and caring. It is highly inclusive. A sense of nurture pervades the school. Achievements are celebrated. Pupils recognise that their teachers want them to do well. They feel valued and cared for. Pupils are confident and self-assured. They are kind and caring. There are many opportunities to develop

pupils' leadership skills. For example, pupils sit on the eco and school councils. Others are elected to be 'safeguarding sheriffs'. Pupils attend meetings with governors where they report on their activities.

Teachers encourage pupils to develop different behaviours for learning. They work well collaboratively and are keen to support one another. Pupils also work well independently and demonstrate resilience in their learning. They have embraced the can-do attitude. For example, some pupils advocate the 'SNOT' approach to seeking help (self, neighbour, other, teacher), while others make use of their peers via the 'helping hotline'. Pupils are determined and keen to succeed. As one pupil explained, 'If we can't do it, it's just because we can't do it *yet*.'

The enhanced resource base provides extremely well for pupils who have complex additional needs. Teaching is carefully planned to enthuse and interest pupils, while meeting their specific learning needs. Staff have high expectations and pupils make good progress as a result.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have developed the curriculum to improve pupils' understanding of different faiths, cultures and lifestyles. Teachers incorporate activities within the topic-based curriculum in lessons, and learning is deepened through a range of additional activities, such as visiting places of worship and participating in 'faith and culture days'. These activities are followed up in lessons. For example, pupils in Year 5 wrote letters of appreciation, reflecting on their visit to a mosque, and pupils in Year 4 wrote stories based on Sikh values. Pupils understand diversity and are respectful of those who are different to themselves.

You have introduced a series of 'non-negotiables', a set of expectations of teachers' planning and delivery, to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. Teachers understand these expectations and meet them consistently. You have also introduced a new marking and feedback policy. Again, this is applied consistently by all staff and supports pupils to reflect on, and to improve, their work. Pupils enjoy the purple pen 'fix-it' activities, where they respond to teachers' feedback and additional challenges. Pupils' books show that this policy, although in its infancy, is having a very positive impact on pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics and writing.

Considerable work has been undertaken to improve the quality of mathematics provision throughout the school. You have reflected on the effective use of time and amended the structure of the school day, to increase the time allocated to mathematics. The mathematics leader has introduced a range of carefully considered initiatives to improve both the curriculum and quality of teaching in this area. She has ensured that teachers and teaching assistants are well trained and have the knowledge, skills and understanding to implement the new, whole-school approach to teaching and learning in mathematics effectively. The curriculum now provides frequent and regular opportunities for pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills. The mathematics leader has also taken effective action

to ensure that teachers plan activities to meet the needs of different abilities. Teachers assess pupils' prior learning and use this information to plan activities which provide appropriate challenge for all pupils. The least able pupils are effectively supported and the most able are sufficiently challenged. In the lessons we visited, teachers used questioning extremely well, drawing out pupils' understanding and furthering their learning.

The mathematics leader has worked with other leaders to develop opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematics skills in different subject areas. For example, in Year 2, pupils use tally charts as part of their 'mini-beast' topic and, in Year 6, pupils calculate casualties and explore ratios in rationing as part of their work around the Second World War. The new curriculum and approach to teaching mathematics has also inspired teachers to plan activities which interest and excite pupils. In all the lessons we visited, pupils were thoroughly absorbed in their learning because activities were closely matched to their ability and used stimuli designed to interest them. For example, pupils in the enhanced resource base were using live snails as part of their ordering and scale work, and pupils in Year 6 were working out ratios of ingredients required to make chocolate mousse. Pupils enjoy their learning and are making more rapid progress than in the past. The mathematics leader carefully monitors the quality of teaching and the implementation of the curriculum, providing effective challenge and support where necessary.

Since the last inspection, you have identified the need to improve pupils' writing. You have introduced a new approach called 'hot and cold writes'. This is a similar approach to that used in mathematics and teachers use 'cold writes', initial pieces of work to assess pupils' learning needs and set pupils bespoke targets. Following teaching input, pupils apply their learning and focus on their targets when they complete their 'hot writes'. Pupils said that they find this approach helpful. Work in pupils' books demonstrates that pupils are now making more rapid progress in writing.

Governors are clear about the school's priorities. They are well informed about the school's progress and ensure that they are kept up to date with accurate information that they verify with external advisers. They have the skills and knowledge to hold leaders to account and do so effectively. For example, leaders regularly attend meetings with governors to report on the impact of their work.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support, for example in developing leaders at all levels in the school. You are also proactive in seeking support from consultants and other schools. For example, leaders have visited other schools within the cluster to learn from best practice elsewhere. Staff are particularly appreciative of the professional development opportunities they have gained from working as part of the 'maths hub'.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector