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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Scott Howes
Headteacher
Little Stoke Primary School
Little Stoke Lane
Little Stoke
Bristol
BS34 6HY

Dear Mr Howes

Short inspection of Little Stoke Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You lead the school with drive and ambition, ably supported by your deputy headteacher and a strong staff team who share your high expectations for all aspects of pupils' learning and welfare. Since the previous inspection, you have further developed the design of the curriculum so that pupils extend their literacy and mathematical skills across other subjects. For example, teachers further pupils' scientific knowledge effectively by giving them opportunities to write at length about their learning and to use their mathematical skills accurately when presenting information. The learning environment demonstrates the high expectations you have and the enriched curriculum on offer, from displays of pupils' writing about Shakespeare plays to high-quality learning about preventing bullying, science and mathematics.

Governors are well informed about the school's performance and carry out their monitoring responsibilities diligently. They have an accurate understanding of the quality of the school's work and what needs to improve further. Governors use the detailed framework of the school improvement plan to hold leaders to account for the progress that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make across the school. By regularly reviewing the impact of the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, governors have made sure that they target resources precisely. Furthermore, they have well-founded plans to use funding to further improve rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and appreciate the school's varied and interesting curriculum, both within and beyond the school day. Those I spoke with described the 'wide range of activities' that they enjoy, including learning musical instruments, painting and writing stories. One pupil's comment, that the school is 'positive and interesting, we learn a lot of new things', was typical of pupils' views. Parents are mostly extremely happy with the provision and appreciate leaders' work to involve them in school life. For example, most parents and carers who responded to Parent View, the Ofsted online survey, said that they would recommend the school. Their views included comments such as, 'The support and care given to pupils is excellent,' and: 'The school has worked hard on building positive working relationships with parents and you feel welcomed at school if you have any questions to ask.'

At the previous inspection, the level of challenge that pupils receive was an area for improvement. We discussed how leaders have continued to raise teachers' expectations in line with the increased demands of the national curriculum. Leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching and raise expectations in the early years class and in key stage 1 have improved the levels of challenge and support that pupils receive. Consequently, more pupils achieve the standards expected for their age at the end of the early years. More pupils than the national average achieved the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2017. You recognise, however, that the progress that key stage 2 pupils have made in the past has been too slow, especially in reading and mathematics. At the start of the inspection, we agreed to review the quality of teaching and challenge for pupils in these key areas.

Safeguarding is effective.

The work to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils is a strength of the school. Leaders know pupils and their families extremely well, and are sensitive to the challenges and needs of the local community. They make swift referrals and work closely with specialist agencies to support pupils and families who need extra help.

Governors have good oversight of the school's responsibility to keep pupils safe. They make regular checks on the effect that staff training is having on the reporting of concerns about pupils. In addition, they regularly monitor the school's checks on the suitability of adults who work or volunteer with pupils in school and make sure that records are kept to a high standard.

Pupils who spoke with me, or completed the online survey, said that they felt safe and secure in school. They told me that all adults are 'very good at helping you to get through issues' and that the very rare incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. They recognise the many ways that the school acts to keep them safe, including when using the internet and by making sure that visitors are carefully checked before entering the school site.

Inspection findings

- First, we considered the impact of leaders' actions in ensuring that pupils of middle ability in key stage 2 make enough progress in reading. This was because published

assessment information indicated that in recent years at the end of Year 6 the progress of the group fell below the national average.

- Leaders have taken action to improve the teaching of reading. In particular, pupils' vocabulary is being improved by carefully planned tasks and reinforcement of unfamiliar words and phrases. Pupils' work in Year 6 shows that work to find definitions of words and appropriate synonyms is strengthening the pupils' command of language. This, along with improved teaching of inference skills and higher expectations of pupils' written responses to texts, has raised outcomes for middle-ability pupils in upper key stage 2. Pupils from Year 6 who read to me did so fluently and confidently. They showed a good understanding of what they read and could explain their predictions and the meaning of phrases such as 'a volcanic temper tantrum'. We agreed, however, that progress in some key stage 2 classes is not as strong as it should be and that the level of challenge is currently too variable. In addition, we agreed that there is more to do to help middle-ability pupils to reach the higher standards in reading as only a small number are currently challenged well enough to work at greater depth.
- Our second line of enquiry was to evaluate the progress that middle-ability pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make in mathematics in key stage 2. Progress for these groups has been slower than that seen nationally in recent years.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers' planning has improved to make sure that middle-ability pupils have more regular opportunities to use and apply their knowledge to solving problems and to justify their reasoning. As well as this, teachers have raised their expectations of pupils' knowledge of number facts and their fluency in calculations. These firm foundations mean that middle-ability pupils are now making stronger progress across key stage 2.
- The next line of enquiry considered how leaders are improving the progress that the small number of disadvantaged pupils make in mathematics in key stage 1.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching, so that pupils regularly use practical experiences to help them to understand mathematical concepts. Their workbooks show that they frequently use their knowledge to solve problems. Pupils receive strong teaching in the early years class, which provides a firm foundation to build their understanding of number. As a result of these raised expectations, disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress than their peers.
- Finally, we considered attendance. You are aware that the number of pupils who miss school regularly has been too high in recent years. You have worked proactively with external agencies, and the local authority education welfare officer, to reduce rates of absence. You have taken action to emphasise to parents the importance of good attendance and, where necessary, issue penalty notices to families who take holidays during school time. You encourage good attendance and punctuality through rewards such as the 'golden boot' for classes with the best attendance. As a result, attendance is improving. Leaders and governors are aware that the work to reduce the amount of time that a small number of pupils are absent needs to continue.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching of middle-ability pupils in reading improves further, so that a greater proportion in each key stage 2 class work at the expectations for their age and the higher standard
- the work to improve rates of attendance and reduce the number of pupils who regularly miss school continues to have a positive impact.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Mirams
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and your leadership team. We reviewed your plans for improvement, information on current pupils' progress and your own evaluation of the school's performance. I conducted learning walks with leaders and listened to pupils read together with the deputy headteacher. I also met with members of the governing body and scrutinised minutes of governing body meetings.

I met with leaders who are responsible for standards in mathematics, English and science and reviewed records of their plans and checks on teaching. I met with a group of pupils and discussed their viewpoints on the curriculum, behaviour, bullying and keeping safe, including online. I scrutinised various safeguarding records and current information about school attendance. I reviewed the school's behaviour records and records of exclusions. I spoke to a representative of South Gloucestershire local authority and the local authority education welfare officer on the telephone.

I also considered 28 responses to the pupil survey, 17 responses to the staff survey and 36 parent responses to the online survey, Parent View.