

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



11 June 2018

Mrs Tracy Price
Headteacher
James Bateman Junior High School
Park Lane
Knypersley
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST8 7AT

Dear Mrs Price

Short inspection of James Bateman Junior High School

Following my visit to the school on 16 May 2018 with Julie Griffiths, Ofsted Inspector, 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 have created a positive learning culture across the school, with a high level of respect between staff and pupils. Staff care about pupils' well-being and academic progress. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Parents indicate that their children are happy, feel safe and make good progress.

You have introduced rigorous self-review and school improvement systems throughout the school. As a result, you have a clear and accurate view of the schools' current strengths and areas that need development. You plan effective actions to improve the identified areas of weakness and frequently monitor the impact of these on pupils' progress and performance. Governors are highly supportive and know the school well. They play an active role in the school's self-review and improvement processes and are rigorous in holding leaders to account.

You have implemented school-wide teaching, learning and assessment policies. As a result of these, the school's assessment information indicates that current pupils are making strong progress towards achieving or exceeding their targets in most subjects. However, you also recognise, rightly, that there is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stage 2 mathematics. As result, key stage 2 pupils should be doing better in mathematics.

At the previous inspection, you were charged with improving the quality of teaching to raise achievement by setting regular homework to research more deeply into

topics. Leaders were also asked to check pupils' progress rigorously in order to move them on in subjects other than English and mathematics. They were asked to provide pupils with opportunities to practise mathematics skills across a range of subjects in key stage 3.

You have reviewed and simplified the school's homework policy. As a result, pupils receive regular homework, which encourages them to consolidate and extend their learning. Most parents indicate that their children receive appropriate homework for their age. Leaders have introduced rigorous assessment systems across the school. Frequent internal and external moderation is improving the accuracy of assessment. This is also helping teachers plan lessons that meet pupils' needs and abilities across a broad range of subjects and topics. For example, inspectors saw evidence of pupils practising mathematical skills in key stage 3 in science and design and technology lessons.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership of safeguarding is strong. You and the staff give safeguarding the highest priority in your school. Appropriate safeguarding checks are in place and record-keeping is detailed and accurate. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and are clear about procedures. Consequently, staff are vigilant and pass on any concerns they have about pupils. Safeguarding procedures are regularly scrutinised by the governing body.

All the pupils that we spoke with said they feel safe at school and know who to turn to if they have any concerns. They reported that bullying is rare and that, if it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils appreciate the teaching they receive from the school on keeping themselves safe, for example internet safety training. As a result, pupils show a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Inspection findings

- Leaders use a range of information to evaluate effectively the quality of education that the school is providing. Sources include analysis of progress and attainment data, observations of teaching, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils. Senior leaders are supported in this process by curriculum leaders, progress leaders, governors and external consultants. As a result, school leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which they use as the basis to plan for improvement. These plans are reviewed and updated each term so that staff are clear about the priorities for improvement.
- Leaders were disappointed by key stage 2 reading and mathematics outcomes in 2017, following positive results in 2016. This variability led to them questioning the accuracy of their own assessment procedures and the subsequent introduction in September 2017 of termly standardised testing across all years in reading, spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPAG) and mathematics. At the same time the school has worked with primary feeder schools to introduce the

same standardised testing at key stage 1. Curriculum leaders have also moderated assessment with other schools to ensure accurate assessments. As a consequence of this work, leaders now have a clear picture of whole-school performance and can quickly identify individuals or groups that need to catch up.

- The curriculum leader for English has relaunched the 'accelerated reader' programme following the dip in national key stage 2 reading results in 2017. At the same time, in response to feedback from the local high school, a 'free writing' initiative has been introduced. Pupils spoken with during lessons and in meetings were enthusiastic about these initiatives, commenting that they have led to greater enjoyment of both reading and writing.
- The school's teaching, learning and assessment policies ensure that pupils understand and respond to their 'next steps' in learning. Where this approach is implemented effectively, pupils typically make strong progress, for example in key stage 3 mathematics. Where the school's policies are not followed, progress is not as evident, for example in key stage 2 mathematics. Leaders are aware that the implementation of this policy is variable and are rightly taking steps to ensure that it is applied consistently.
- Governors ensure that the school provides the very best opportunities for all its pupils. The work they undertake means that they have a clear and accurate view of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. As a result, the governing body is effective at holding leaders to account, while at the same time offering valuable support. The team of governors bring a wide range of appropriate skills and keep themselves up to date with current governor and educational developments.
- Leaders have spent the school's pupil premium funding effectively, helping disadvantaged pupils make strong progress in 2016 and 2017. The current pupil premium strategy shows a determination to improve outcomes further through an analysis of barriers to success and careful allocation of resources matched to the specific needs of pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils have access to a wide range of academic and social opportunities and resources.
- Leaders and other staff create a positive atmosphere in the school, both in and out of lessons. Pupils say that their teachers and other staff have high expectations of them and that they are well taught. Parents indicate that they agree with this view. Pupils feel that behaviour is good typically, and that staff deal well with any minor disruptions to learning. Consequently this creates an environment where pupils feel confident and enjoy learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make better progress in mathematics, particularly at key stage 2
- curriculum leaders implement the school's assessment policy and teaching and learning policy consistently across all subjects in both key stages 2 and 3.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Wilkes
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, senior leaders, curriculum leaders for English and mathematics, and governors. We visited a number of subject areas with your senior leaders to observe teaching and look at pupils' work. We had formal meetings with groups of pupils from key stage 2 and key stage 3. Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the school's record of safeguarding recruitment checks on staff. They reviewed a range of other documentary evidence, including that relating to your ongoing self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and data on pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspectors considered the views of 25 parents through their responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and Ofsted's free-text service. 43 responses to the staff questionnaire were taken into account. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.