

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 June 2018

Mr Danny Eason
Headteacher
Fishburn Primary School
East View
Fishburn
Stockton-on-Tees
TS21 4AU

Dear Mr Eason

Short inspection of Fishburn 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 June 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 have embedded a positive, welcoming environment with a strong nurturing ethos. Parents speak positively of the school because they feel listened to. One parent commented, 'I am very happy with the school... regarding stranger danger... I received a swift response and support'. Pupils value your school and say that learning is fun. They particularly enjoy online mathematics challenges, competing against other schools with quick-fire mathematics questions. Pupils also like recent changes to the English curriculum and say that learning is more meaningful when taught through a class novel. Your staff recognise the important role your school plays within the local community, and actively work with external partners, for example Durham University, to help raise aspirations for pupils. The appointment of a new deputy headteacher since your last inspection has increased your leadership and management capacity.

The previous inspection report challenged you to better prepare early years children for the Year 1 curriculum. You took the recommendation seriously and worked with external partners, such as the local authority, to develop several aspects of early years provision. For example, a new phonics-based reading programme was put in place and you revamped the early years outdoor learning environment. Nevertheless, children in both the Nursery and the Reception classes continue to make inconsistent progress in reading and phonics from their different starting points because teaching and learning is variable in quality. For example, although children are now more eager to write, following your

recent writing initiative, they still lack basic skills in letter formation and knowledge of sentence structure. Alongside senior leaders, you have identified the need for greater challenge in Reception to prepare children for the demands of the Year 1 curriculum.

The teaching of phonics was also identified as an area requiring further improvement during the previous inspection. You have introduced a new phonics programme into Reception and key stage 1. Despite your actions, however, the teaching, learning and assessment of phonics in these key stages is still not consistently strong. Teachers do not reliably use assessment information and knowledge of what pupils know and can do to adapt teaching suitably to meet their varying needs. Progress for the most able pupils in phonics is slow because they are not always challenged in their learning and tasks.

You have correctly identified that teaching and pupils' outcomes in reading are in need of improvement. You have already changed your English curriculum and introduced pupils to more challenging novels. Pupils in key stage 2, for example, value the opportunity to read daily and talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors and genres. However, in the early years and in key stage 1, a more strategic approach to the teaching and learning of phonics and early reading is needed. In these key stages, opportunities to read with adults are inconsistent. Some pupils lack basic phonics skills to help them read unfamiliar words. Reading texts are not always matched appropriately to pupils' varying phonics abilities. Rates of progress for current pupils are, therefore, too variable. Your English leaders do not currently have a clear overview of reading throughout the school. This impacts on their ability to make informed, decisive plans to bring about improvement.

You have started to offer leaders across the curriculum opportunities to lead and manage their areas of responsibility. In science, for example, leaders are developing opportunities for pupils to develop their practical investigation skills. Leaders' action plans, however, lack the detail needed to inform their actions or to bring about improvement in pupils' achievement, or to show how they intend to measure their impact. The quality of science in key stage 1 pupils' books, in particular, demonstrates that current pupils are not making consistently good progress.

You and your governors are keen to secure improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. You have devised a statement that identifies where and how you will spend the additional funds that the school receives. However, your spending plan from last year has not been evaluated thoroughly enough in order to help you focus on the correct priorities this year. This year's plan lacks detail, and it is unclear how additional funding will be targeted or will be evaluated.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other leaders have ensured that the arrangements to keep pupils safe are effective and fit for purpose. Appropriate, rigorous checks are made on the suitability of adults to work with pupils. Staff receive the training that they need on child protection and safeguarding matters. You and your business manager ensure that frequent updates mean that the most recent guidance and information is understood. Safeguarding records are detailed. Leaders' actions and logs demonstrate their effective engagement

with other agencies when pupils are at risk of harm.

The positive relationships and respect that exists between adults and pupils are evidence of your work to ensure that pupils feel cared for and safe. Pupils said that adults would listen if they had any worries. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe online.

Behaviour is a strength of the school. Pupils are polite and talk confidently to visitors. On the rare occasion where poor behaviour leads to exclusion, you have taken action to ensure that pupils get the support that they need.

Inspection findings

- Over the past three years, outcomes in the early years have declined. In 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was just below the national average. Over the same period, there has also been a decline in the proportion of pupils achieving the early learning goal for writing. Leaders agree that, historically, teacher assessment was not accurate and current outcomes give a more accurate measure. You have introduced a number of new initiatives since the previous inspection. However, leaders do not systematically monitor the impact of their actions or hold teachers to account. You have identified that children need to be better prepared for the demands of the key stage 1 curriculum.
- Staff are trained and have a good understanding of the teaching of phonics. However, despite the introduction of a new phonics programme, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017 fell to well below average. The number of pupils within the year group who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the arrival of new children into school, had an impact on these results. Even so, there is no clear systematic approach to help these pupils to catch up. The quality of phonics teaching is too variable and does not accelerate pupils' progress.
- Some teachers ensure that pupils read frequently with adults in the school. In some classes, detailed, well-maintained reading records support staff to shape activities to suit pupils' needs and interests. Systems, and the quality of teaching and learning in reading, however, are not consistent from class to class, or across key stages. Not all pupils, especially in the early years or key stage 1, read frequently. As a result, some pupils do not make the progress in reading that they should.
- You use local expertise to enrich the science curriculum, particularly in Years 5 and 6, through close links with Durham University. In some classes, pupils enjoy a wide range of practical investigations, which enable them to develop their scientific knowledge and enquiry skills. However, the quality of work in pupils' science books is variable throughout the school and pupils' written evidence of what they know and can do does not consistently support teacher assessment information, particularly in key stage 1. Not all teachers insist on accuracy in pupils' use of scientific vocabulary, spelling, grammar and punctuation at an age-appropriate level.
- In 2017, key stage 2 results show strong progress for disadvantaged pupils, especially in English and mathematics. Across key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils make comparable progress to other pupils in school. However, in key stage 1, disadvantaged pupils are not making consistently good progress across the subjects.

Leaders' monitoring and evaluation of the impact of their spending of the pupil premium is not thorough. Plans do not pinpoint precisely how spending will support disadvantaged pupils to catch-up quickly with others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a strategic approach to the teaching and learning of phonics and reading is embedded in the early years and key stage 1
- middle leaders, particularly in English and science, develop the skills needed to monitor teaching and learning effectively
- teaching, learning and assessment in the early years is consistently good
- the pupil premium plan is detailed and evaluated regularly to maximise outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Andy Jones
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I discussed the school's work with you, your deputy headteacher and other leaders. I also held a meeting with the leaders for English, science and the early years. You and I jointly observed the teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1. I met with a representative from the local authority and two governors, your chair of the governing body and vice chair. I took into account school documentation, including monitoring records and your school improvement plan, assessment information, policies and information posted on the school's website. I scrutinised work in pupils' books, listened to pupils read and spoke with pupils from all key stages. I considered seven responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. I spoke to staff during the inspection and considered the views of nine members of staff who completed the Ofsted online questionnaire.