

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



9 July 2018

Mr Quirk
Headteacher
Kettleshulme St James CofE (VA) Primary School
Macclesfield Road
Kettleshulme
High Peak
Cheshire
SK23 7QU

Dear Mr Quirk

Short inspection of Kettleshulme St James CofE (VA) Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 June 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 October 2013.

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.**

Under your leadership, you have maintained the good quality of education since the last inspection. The school is a very small, happy and close-knit community. You have been instrumental in creating a warm and nurturing learning environment that makes all children welcome. Relationships with parents, carers and pupils are positive. 'It's fantastic how the whole school blends as one. All the children are friends irrespective of their ages.' 'The school helps create well-rounded and considerate future citizens.' These are typical of the many positive comments made by parents about the school. A warm atmosphere welcomes visitors, parents and pupils as they enter the school. You know and understand the community you serve very well. Parents are equally supportive of their children and most take an active part in ongoing learning at home.

Following our discussions, observations of lessons and scrutiny of work in pupils' books, it was evident that lessons and work set for pupils could be more challenging. You recognise that progress across the school needs to be improved. You are putting plans in place to develop the broader curriculum, but implementation has been slower than expected. This delay means that pupils' writing and their outcomes in some subjects, such as science, history, geography and design and technology, for example, are not as well developed as they could

be. You have correctly identified that there is a need to develop subject expertise across the school in order to rectify this.

The governing body is very supportive of the school. Governors visit the school regularly and spend time reflecting on the views of staff and pupils. They are ambitious for the school and ensure that financial resources are targeted appropriately. They have been less astute in questioning the impact of initiatives on pupils' outcomes. During my discussions with governors, they acknowledged that the school website is not compliant and too much of the documentation is out of date. They understood their responsibilities and the need to provide greater challenge linked to impact and underperformance in the future.

During my observations outside during break and on walks around the school with you, I noted the positive behaviour of pupils and the considerate way in which the different age groups interact and play with each other. Pupils were keen to talk to me and I enjoyed my conversations with them. Their attitudes to learning are very positive and they are keen to please teachers and parents. There are very few incidents of poor behaviour, and all pupils feel that they are, in their own words, 'part of the whole-school family'. However, pupils identified that they find too many lessons relatively easy and, at times, work is a repetition of that completed in previous years. They also identified that lessons in subjects such as history, geography, design and technology and science are not taught regularly. Scrutiny of their work confirmed this. You recognise the difficulties of teaching mixed-age classes and are attempting to streamline the curriculum to ensure the more systematic coverage of such subjects in the future.

At the time of the previous inspection, you were asked to ensure that teachers checked pupils' progress more effectively and developed their teaching to support pupils to make greater progress. In line with the school's policy, teachers' marking and feedback in English and mathematics are more detailed and pupils remarked that they are informative. However, in other subjects teachers do not complete this with the same detail or rigour. Teachers do observe each other's lessons, but this is too infrequent and not evaluative enough to improve classroom practice. Currently, some areas of pupils' progress require improvement, and teachers do not consistently challenge pupils to attain at greater depth. You have only had limited success in addressing these issues raised by the previous inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils feel, and are, safe in the school. There is a strong culture of safeguarding. All adults, including the governors, take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Regular training and updates are provided for everybody. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Every member of staff understands their statutory responsibility to keep children safe and, on those rare occasions when any concerns have been raised, procedures have been followed to the letter. Pupils were adamant that bullying does not occur, but were confident that they could talk to the adults should they have any worries. Checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school meet current requirements.

Inspection findings

- Children enter the school with skills and knowledge which are at or above those typical for their age. Many start school able to hold a pen correctly and form letters confidently. Outcomes in phonics are consistently high. Overall, without exception, all children achieve a good level of development, but few exceed this. The girls tend to do better than the boys. This gender gap, which appears early on in their education, often persists right through the school.
- Similarly, at key stage 1, the number of pupils reaching the expected standards is consistently above the national average. However, with very small numbers of pupils in each year group, outcomes can vary greatly from year to year. In particular, given their potential, too few pupils attained greater depth.
- This pattern is replicated across key stage 2, with most pupils attaining expected outcomes, but few pupils reaching higher standards, notably in writing. Given their starting points, too few pupils make good progress across key stage 2. In particular, boys, the most able and the very small number of disadvantaged pupils make weaker progress than that of which they are capable. The level of challenge in too many lessons, and in the tasks set, does not stretch these pupils sufficiently.
- During our observation of lessons, we noted that the pace of sessions was often leisurely and a lack of clear modelling of expectations by the teacher resulted in pupils not making good progress. For example, in science, not all pupils grasped the concept that chocolate needs to be melted under similar temperatures and conditions if the results are to have any valid meaning. Consequently, pupils' understanding lacked clarity.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work showed that work in subjects such as history, geography and science is too fragmented. These subjects are not always taught to sufficient depth, so pupils do not progressively develop their knowledge, skills and understanding sufficiently well. Educational visits to museums and theatres and around the local environment are enjoyable and informative. They engage pupils and raise their expectations. These experiences are not always exploited to their full potential back in the classroom. On those occasions when more time is spent on a topic and it is planned in greater depth, pupils are challenged rigorously and write at length and with high quality. For example, the work on Egypt encouraged pupils to produce some excellent writing to show a good understanding of aspects of life in Ancient Egypt. However, this was the exception rather than the norm.
- Forward planning is well intentioned. However, the complexities of managing change in such a very small school have resulted in some delay in implementation. This is especially so when limited opportunities have been available to train staff and too much has often been attempted within the time frame. In particular, the planned-for subject-specific improvements lack a clear focus. Much involves setting up systems, but there is a distinct lack of ideas on how to improve the teaching of the subject in the classroom. The role of subject leaders is currently underdeveloped.
- School documentation often provides a detailed description of what is being

attempted but does not evaluate its impact. In particular, it does not specifically address the key issue of a lack of challenge and some pupils' underachievement. Governors have not challenged school leaders sufficiently on this aspect. This has not supported forward planning well.

- The school's website is relatively easy to navigate and provides a range of useful information for parents. However, it is not fully compliant with current requirements. Too much documentation is out of date, despite the fact that more current information is available. Performance data lacks clarity about progress, and there is no link to school performance tables. Curriculum information mainly reproduces the national curriculum programmes of study and fails to provide specific detail to show depth of coverage in subjects. There is also no indication of the phonics or reading schemes followed by the school. The documentation related to the use of the pupil premium funding and the physical education (PE) and sport funding is not up to date and lacks evaluative comment regarding their impact. The information regarding pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and child protection information are also out of date and do not reflect the current picture.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- strategies to provide greater challenge for pupils are incorporated into classroom practice in order that more pupils, especially boys, disadvantaged pupils and the most able make better progress and attain at greater depth
- training and relevant resources are provided to ensure that teachers are able to teach the full range of subjects with confidence and to a greater depth. This includes the ongoing need to develop the role of subject leaders
- governors provide greater challenge by focusing more clearly on the impact of the strategies employed and that funding provides value for money
- the website is compliant so it fully meets current requirements.

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

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, members of the governing body, staff and pupils from several classes. I held a telephone conversation with the school improvement partner. I observed pupils during their break and, accompanied by you, I visited all three classrooms to see the learning that was taking place. With you, I looked at examples of pupils' work in their books. In particular, I especially looked at work in topic books and the work covered in science, history and geography. A range of documentation was considered, including the single central record, the school self-evaluation, the development plan and the school's own assessment information relating to both past and current progress. I took account of 20 responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. Consideration was also given to the Ofsted online questionnaires completed by three members of staff. There were no pupils' responses.