

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Donnellan
Headteacher
Chivenor Primary School
Farnborough Road
Castle Vale
Birmingham
West Midlands
B35 7JA

Dear Ms Donnellan

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Chivenor Primary School

Following my visit to your academy on 5 July 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 academy 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 received a judgement of requires improvement at its first section 5 inspection.

Senior leaders and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the academy to become good.

The academy should take further action to ensure that:

- pupils develop more effective problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics using their mathematical knowledge and understanding
- leaders develop a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting
- teachers have consistently high expectations of spelling, grammar, handwriting and presentation in all subjects.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, the multi-academy trust chief executive officer, and two other trust members to discuss the

actions taken since the last inspection. I met parents at the start of the school day and spoke to pupils informally about their learning. I carried out a learning walk and looked at pupils' work with senior leaders. I considered a range of documents such as the single central record, the school improvement plan and raising achievement plan, the school's self-evaluation, assessment information, minutes of school improvement board meetings and monitoring records of teaching and learning.

Context

Significant staff changes have taken place at a leadership level since the previous inspection. You joined the school in November 2017 as the new headteacher; two senior leaders left and two internal appointments were made to create a new leadership team of four assistant headteachers. Three new middle leaders have recently been appointed.

Main findings

Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have taken effective action to bring about improvements in the school. You and they are highly aspirational for pupils, parents and the community. You have a clear strategic overview of what needs to be done to improve the school further. You are working effectively with your leadership team and the trust to ensure that the school is on a trajectory of rapid improvement.

The trust supports the school well and has established a 'school improvement board' to ensure that the school is focused on addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Together, you have established clear strategic plans with long-term sustainability. These are monitored closely for impact on pupils' progress, with expected outcomes clearly defined. Capacity is building at every level and aspirations and expectations are rising quickly. Increased rigour and effective self-evaluation has ensured that leaders focus on the right things to improve outcomes for pupils. The trust has ensured that leaders are well placed to improve the school further.

Previously there was some instability in staffing, including at leadership level. This is now stable, enabling leaders to work with teachers more effectively. Consequently the quality of teaching is improving quickly. You provide targeted support and training for teachers and they are keen to develop themselves. You have ensured that capacity is continuing to grow and have recently appointed some new middle leaders so that the work to improve the school can be distributed and sustained.

You have invested in high-quality training, for example to ensure that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. This is taught effectively. In writing, pupils apply their phonic knowledge well. Pupils in Reception write phonically plausible words and can write words such as 'and', 'the', and 'will' accurately. Consequently, outcomes in phonics are improving and are now much closer to the national average.

In 2017, progress in reading and mathematics dipped at the end of key stage 2. In response leaders have implemented reading programmes to develop pupils' comprehension skills and also focused on developing a love of reading. You have overhauled the reading material in school and ensured that pupils not only have access to books that they like but also to high-quality texts that will further broaden and develop their vocabulary. You have introduced strategies to encourage regular reading such as raffle prizes and a 'story telling book club'. Internal assessment information shows that pupils are now making stronger progress in their reading and standards are improving at both key stage 1 and key stage 2.

In mathematics, you have provided training and support to improve teachers' confidence and subject knowledge. You have introduced a range of strategies to help pupils such as 'pit stops' so that pupils regularly review their learning. Pupils' ability to solve problems and apply reasoning skills in mathematics is improving. However, some pupils have not yet developed their reasoning skills well enough to use their mathematical knowledge to explain their understanding, and need to practise these skills more.

In writing, you have ensured that assessment is more accurate. Teachers now address misconceptions in spelling, grammar and punctuation more consistently. However, some pupils continue to make the same errors. The quality of some pupils' handwriting and presentation is poor because there is not a clear model for them to follow and teachers do not have consistently high expectations. Pupils are now given more opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English. The most able pupils write well and fluently. They use increasingly sophisticated language and a wider range of punctuation and grammar features. Staff have now developed strategies to help pupils write more independently.

As a result of rigorous monitoring and a range of effective strategies, attendance has further improved and is now in line with the national average. Persistent absence has also reduced significantly and is now below the national average.

In lessons, pupils behave well and are now more focused on their learning because teachers are planning work that better meets their needs. However, this is still work in progress. You are beginning to develop a more creative approach to your curriculum because you know that pupils respond better when they are inspired. You provide rich opportunities in music, art, sport and drama and a range of visits and visitors to school so that pupils are now better engaged.

Children join the Reception Year with skills and knowledge well below that typically expected for their age. Nevertheless, teachers have high expectations. Routines are well established. For example, in the 'Snack Shack' children choose their fruit and milk with a minimum of fuss. One child told another, 'Wash your hands first.' Children work well independently because they are clear about what they have to do. They make their own 'learning choices' and settle quickly to tasks. The outdoor learning environment has been developed to provide greater opportunities for open-

ended learning and further challenge. Children are focused and engaged in their learning, for example by writing a message in a bottle, making boats and seeing if they float in the water tray. Adults support children well, showing them how to cut plastic carefully. They ask effective questions and challenge children to improve their writing by adding 'because' or using adjectives. The percentage of children achieving a good level of development has improved to above the national average so that children are now much better prepared for Year 1.

External support

Leaders use external support well to provide training for staff so that the quality of teaching continues to improve and pupils' behaviour is managed more effectively. Collaborative working and support from leaders and schools within the trust is benefiting the school to improve further.

I am copying this letter to the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Cameron
Her Majesty's Inspector