

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 September 2018

Mr John Riches
Headteacher
Bardwell School
Hendon Place
Sunderland Drive
Bicester
Oxfordshire
OX26 4RZ

Dear Mr Riches

Short inspection of Bardwell School

Following my visit to the school on 19 July 2018 with Ross Macdonald, 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

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

You are relentless in your pursuit of high achievement for all pupils. Along with senior leaders, you have continued your journey in taking the school forward since the last inspection. There is now a greater focus on pupils' learning, and increased consistency in your planning and target-setting arrangements. You are passionate about ensuring that all pupils in your school are supported as individuals to achieve their full potential. You and your staff team are determined to provide opportunities for all pupils to develop, both academically and personally, in order to prepare them for their next destinations, including college and the workplace.

Your staff are very proud to be members of Bardwell School and they share your vision and values. They have a high level of job satisfaction and agree that the school is well led and managed. Teachers and teaching assistants alike believe that there is now a real sense of working together as a teaching team. The local authority recognises what you have developed at this school, and senior leaders of local special schools have visited to see your detailed curriculum in action.

You correctly recognise that every pupil in your school has individual needs. As a result, you have ensured that there is a highly effective curriculum in place that is tailor-made to meet these needs. Your well-trained staff create individualised learning plans and meet the educational and personal needs of pupils effectively.

Teachers have very positive relationships with pupils and, as a result, they know them all very well. Where best practice is in place, teaching assistants skilfully support their colleagues in the delivery of lessons, ensuring that pupils make good progress in their learning.

You are engaged in a constant cycle of successful improvement and you never believe that your work is ever done. The strengths of the school and any areas for improvement are very well known by all leaders. For example, you have correctly identified that there is still some inconsistency in the level of challenge offered to develop pupils' learning. You have successfully met the areas for improvement recommended in the previous inspection. Teaching assistants' input into lesson planning and delivery has improved, and pupils' progress has increased as a result. Additionally, teachers now have a greater understanding of the new curriculum due to the programme of professional development in place.

All parents who completed the school's questionnaire say that they would recommend Bardwell School to other parents. They report that their children are taught well and that the school is well led and managed. One parent said that she 'could not be more happy' with the school.

Pupils say that going to this school is good and fun, and that they are learning something new every day. Pupils also appreciate the extensive extra-curricular activities available to them that support their social as well as educational needs. These include trips abroad, fundraising and a recent dance project.

Safeguarding is effective.

There are very effective procedures for safeguarding children at this school. Robust checks on staff are carried out before they take up a post, to check that they are suitable to work with children. You ensure that staff and governors keep their knowledge up to date through regular agenda items during meetings and in newsletters, as well as via appropriate training. Important safeguarding documents have been read and understood by all staff and governors. Governors fully appreciate their safeguarding role.

Pupils are supervised well at all times while on site. They report that they feel safe at school and that they know who to talk with if they are concerned about anything. Pupils are provided with the information they need to understand and manage risk, both online and in the community. All parents who completed the online survey and/or the school's own questionnaire agreed that pupils are well looked after and safe.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, as well as evaluating safeguarding arrangements, we agreed that the focus areas were: to what extent teaching assistants are organised in the classrooms and what impact this has on pupils' progress; how knowledgeable teachers are across all areas of the new curriculum and how this

has enhanced teaching and learning; and how well leaders communicate with all stakeholders outside of the school.

- Since the last inspection, teaching assistants have been organised more effectively, leading to improved consistency for pupils. Teaching assistants have a greater understanding of pupils' needs and an even stronger positive working relationship with them. Teachers involve their teaching assistants well with their planning and organisation of lessons. However, pupils are not always as fully challenged with their learning as the planning suggests they should be.
- Teachers have developed strong subject knowledge due to regular training opportunities. This training has also led to improvements in teachers' planning and resourcing. Most pupils are engaged with their learning, and where this was observed behaviour was excellent. However, pupils did not make the same rate of progress as their peers where teaching was not sufficiently challenging or stimulating.
- Parents say that communication from school staff is now excellent. At the time of the previous inspection, only two thirds of parents who completed Parent View, the online questionnaire, agreed that the school responds well to concerns raised or would recommend the school to another parent. Now, 95% of parents who completed a recent questionnaire agreed with both. Parents say that this is due to the effective use of communication books, regular newsletters and the implementation of online multimedia assessment. The school's website now meets the statutory requirements set out by the Department for Education. Governors have worked hard to build positive relationships with the local community, recently winning an award for their efforts.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in line with best practice in the school, all staff consistently challenge pupils in accordance with the school's planning processes
- staff enhance the already effective planning by giving pupils maximum opportunities for learning that is stimulating, both inside and outside of the classroom.

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

Yours sincerely

Stuart Cateridge
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, my colleague and I met with you and your senior leaders, teaching and support staff, and the chair and members of the governing body. I also spoke on the telephone with your school improvement partner. We considered the 19 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, the 57 responses from the school's own parent questionnaire, and spoke to some parents in the morning. Inspectors also considered the 48 responses to the school's own survey of staff. We met formally with a group of pupils and also spoke with pupils informally during the day. Inspectors visited all classrooms to observe pupils' learning. We looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment, both academic and non-academic, and leaders' school evaluation and action plans. We also evaluated the school's work to keep pupils safe, including the school's procedures and policies, training records, recruitment checks and record-keeping.