

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



8 October 2018

Mrs Moira Cross
Executive Headteacher
Dordon Primary School
Roman Way
Dordon
Tamworth
Staffordshire
B78 1PJ

Dear Mrs Cross

Short inspection of Dordon Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 September 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.

This school continues to be good.

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

You provide highly effective leadership which is successful in empowering others. Effective leadership at all levels is a key strength in the school. Your determination and dedication to ensure that everyone in the school community thrives shines through strongly. In September 2017, you became the executive headteacher of this school and another trust school. The decision to lead and support a school in difficulty, utilising your own school's strengths and staff expertise, demonstrates your strong moral purpose to ensure that children have the best possible education.

Since the last inspection, the leadership structure at Dordon has changed. An associate headteacher provides day-to-day operational leadership while you divide your time between the two schools. The governing body reconstituted to create one governing body for the two schools. A new chair was elected in January 2018. New leaders have taken on responsibility for English, mathematics and special educational needs (SEN). Last year, several experienced staff moved to support your partner school while several newly qualified teachers joined Dordon Primary. Despite all these changes, you have maintained high expectations and continued to improve outcomes for pupils.

You have a clear strategy for school improvement. Together with other leaders, you explore any new initiative thoroughly before deciding to implement it in your school.

For example, when introducing a new project to strengthen reading, you trialled it and then trained every member of staff before it was rolled out across the school. You wanted to ensure that it was right for your pupils and that it would make a difference. Leaders work alongside staff to sequence and plan lessons. Leaders check the impact of new approaches. You ensure that every cycle of monitoring is followed by coaching and mentoring. This high-quality support and challenge are developing consistently good teaching across the school. In this case, leaders are creating experts in the teaching of reading. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading at the end of key stage 2 has increased each year. Provisional results for 2018 show that proportionally more pupils have reached the expected standard than nationally.

Middle leaders are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and have developed the leadership skills to carry out their jobs effectively. They understand the strengths and areas for development in their subject areas. They challenge underperformance but also know how to support effectively to get the best out of people. This area for development has been addressed successfully since the last inspection.

Governors know the school well and support the drive to improve reading standards. The chair of the governing body visits the school to hear children read, talks to them about their books and discusses the progress pupils make with leaders. Roles and responsibilities are clear. Governors' relationships with school leaders are very positive. Governors bring a wealth of skills and knowledge which they use effectively to hold all leaders to account.

During the inspection, pupils were an absolute delight. Respect is at the heart of their behaviour. They are welcoming, inclusive and tolerant. They cooperate and support each other well in lessons. They have well-developed social skills and a thorough understanding of social conventions. They take turns, listen and know how to conduct themselves. Pupils have an excellent focus on their learning. They understand the importance of being able to read well. They know how to use their reading skills in a range of other subjects. They say it helps them understand mathematical questions. Pupils also demonstrate a love of reading; they talk avidly about favourite books and authors.

Parents are very supportive of the school. They say that the school is fantastic, that their children make very good progress and that staff go the extra mile to ensure that children succeed. Leaders acknowledge that there is still more work to be done to engage parents fully in their children's learning. Hands-on sessions for parents about guided reading and phonics are beginning to help parents know how to support their children with reading at home.

Safeguarding is effective.

A strong safeguarding culture permeates the school. Everyone is committed to ensuring that every child is safe and well cared for. No concern is too small to notice and discuss. Well-trained, highly effective designated safeguarding leads support one another when dealing with critical cases. There is tenacious follow-up

with external agencies. Children are placed at the heart of any decision made.

Good support is provided to families experiencing difficulties. Leaders are effective in breaking down barriers. They are not afraid to hold challenging conversations in order to put children first. Safeguarding projects and specific focus weeks, such as those on e-safety, enable pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. Despite sometimes feeling unsafe in certain parts of the local community, pupils know which adults they can trust to help them. Governors regularly check that all staff are appropriately trained, procedures are followed and children are thriving.

Inspection findings

- Following a dip in outcomes in the early years foundation stage in 2018, I wanted to explore how effectively the very youngest children are taught to read. Leaders ensure that a daily dedicated time is set aside to teach phonics. Adults model the sounds that letters make and encourage children to repeat and practise these. This helps children develop accuracy in their pronunciation. Adults provide instant help to those who struggle. Children with specific difficulties are quickly identified and additional speech and language support is given from the outset. Adults show children how to write the letters and link them to words children are familiar with, such as their names. Appropriate resources are displayed to reinforce the learning throughout the day, which children are beginning to use effectively in their independent work. As a result, children in the early years are developing secure language skills.
- Leaders know the importance of using a structured approach to the teaching of phonics. They ensure that all staff are highly trained and skilled in teaching early reading. Staff expertise is shared. Leaders check on the quality of teaching to ensure that it is of a good quality. Regular assessments are made of children's progress using a new phonics tracker. This helps leaders analyse and accurately evaluate the progress children make. Small-group and one-to-one support are provided to pupils who need extra help. Leaders ensure that no child is left behind. As a result, outcomes in the phonics screening check have been good for a number of years. In 2018, 96% of pupils reached the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1.
- You have a clear vision in place for the development of reading throughout the school. Following the introduction of the new assessment tests at the end of key stage 2, leaders reflected and reviewed the school's practice in teaching reading. A structured programme to raise engagement and attainment in reading was introduced to help staff raise standards and ensure that every child becomes a strong reader. High-quality and suitably challenging texts engage and interest pupils, especially boys.
- Daily, focused, guided reading sessions enable teachers to work with small groups and get to know their pupils as readers. These sessions are purposeful and ensure that pupils acquire reading skills such as inference, deduction, skimming and scanning. They also promote the love of reading through the regular reading of whole texts.
- The culture of reading continues to develop across the school. Leaders plan

immersive experiences such as trips to the theatre and the zoo, which broaden pupils' knowledge, understanding and develop their vocabulary. Pupils use this knowledge well when reading unfamiliar words. A new library is being established. Leaders ensure that new books are suitably challenging as well as of interest to children of all ages and abilities. Links with the local village library, through a governor, enable children to visit and choose from a wider range of books. The headteacher leads by example. She invites children to a reading tea party where stories are shared while enjoying a drink and cake. A love of reading is evident in the school.

- A similar strategic approach to improving standards is now in place focused on mathematics. This is a key priority across the trust. Again, central to this drive for improvement is quality training for all staff, followed by monitoring, coaching and support. Leaders are highly skilled in building success in this way. Staff are becoming more confident to teach pupils the skills to apply their mathematics knowledge and understanding to solve a range of problems. They help pupils develop a deeper understanding. Pupils use a range of practical apparatus to represent their answers. More adults are now able to ask probing questions to ensure that pupils explain what they are doing and why. Leaders acknowledge that this work is in its infancy and there is more work to be done to secure consistently good outcomes in mathematics for all groups of pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they continue to:

- have high expectations of vulnerable groups, accelerating the progress of those who need to catch up, so that all pupils can reach the standards of which they are capable
- work with parents to overcome barriers to learning, especially in reading and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicola Harwood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I looked specifically at how well leaders were improving the teaching of reading and the effectiveness of safeguarding. I held discussions with leaders, including the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust and one of the school governors. I considered the nine responses to the staff questionnaire. I carried out learning walks and visits to classrooms to look at the quality of teaching of reading, including the teaching of phonics. During these visits I spoke with pupils and discussed their work. I listened to several children read and talked with a group of pupils. I looked at the two responses to the pupil questionnaire. I met with parents before school started and considered the 22 responses to Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire and the 21 free-text responses. I looked at a range of documents including: your school self-evaluation document and school development plan; minutes of governors' meetings; and procedures for safeguarding. I checked the school website.