

9 October 2018

Mrs Jane Clarkson
Headteacher
The British School
Wortley Road
Wotton-under-Edge
Gloucestershire
GL12 7JU

Dear Mrs Clarkson

Short inspection of The British School

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 September 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, together with your leadership team, have established a vibrant and positive environment where staff clearly know pupils well. Your core values are central to your approach and you are rightly proud of the external recognition you have received regarding your work to promote the emotional well-being of your pupils. Staff are proud to work at the school and feel supported by leaders.

You have an accurate overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. For example, reading continues to be a strength and there has been an improvement in the progress pupils make in mathematics by the end of Year 6. However, there are aspects of the school's work that have not improved swiftly enough. Notably, the progress that disadvantaged pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics continues to be below that of their classmates. Also, improvements in writing have been too slow to ensure that pupils make the progress they should by the end of key stage 2.

Since the last inspection, you have implemented more effective ways to evaluate the progress pupils are making throughout the year. As a result, you have a greater overview of those pupils who are not making sufficient progress. However, while pupils' emotional and welfare needs are well met, actions are not closely enough aligned to academic progress. Teachers are aware of the areas of learning that are

not secure, but planning does not specifically target these deficits. This means that learning is not well matched to pupils' starting points and misconceptions are not sufficiently remedied. This limits the progress pupils are able to make.

Governors are supportive of the school and have established positive relationships with staff. They visit the school regularly to meet with leaders to gain a better understanding of the standard of education the school provides. They are reflective in evaluating the skills they have so they can improve the effectiveness of their roles. This is particularly pertinent as they have recognised the need to establish greater focus on the areas of the school's work that you know require further development, particularly the progress that disadvantaged pupils make.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Thorough employment checks are in place to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Training is regular and staff are confident in using agreed procedures to report concerns.

Where there are concerns about pupils' welfare, the work of the parent support adviser is effective in providing early help for pupils and their families. You are proactive in working with families and liaise with external partners to support pupils who are at risk. Referrals are detailed and there is a clear outline of action and outcomes.

You are aware of the pupils who do not attend school as regularly as they should and have implemented successful strategies, involving pupils and their families, to improve attendance. This means that attendance continues to be above national averages and persistent absence is low.

Pupils clearly enjoy school and have a well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils in Year 6 spoke eloquently about their 'Bikeability' training and were able to recall what they had learned, so they could advise younger pupils. This support for younger pupils is an important characteristic of your school. Pupils of all ages eat their lunch together and older pupils look after younger pupils during social time. As a result, pupils say they feel safe in school and that bullying is rare. Where this does occur, pupils say that teachers deal with it effectively. Pupils know they can talk to teachers or use the class 'worry box' if they have concerns.

Pupils know how they can keep themselves healthy. They are enthusiastic about their sporting activities and are particularly proud of their 'fit for 15' activities during the week. Pebbles, the school dog, is a much loved member of the school community and pupils enjoy taking her for her daily walks.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection we agreed on the key lines of enquiry. The first of these focused on the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve the progress pupils make by the end of Year 6 in writing. This is because pupils have not made sufficient progress in writing over the last three years.
- Leaders are aware of this and have focused on ways to improve engagement and creativity, particularly for boys. These have been successful in the short-term but pupils are not able to demonstrate that they can apply these skills in the longer term. Together, we looked at books and agreed that teachers do not routinely use assessment information to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve the quality of their compositions. In these instances, misconceptions in letter orientation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are not rectified quickly and pupils continue to make the same mistakes. This hampers their ability to express their ideas effectively.
- Where teaching is stronger, pupils are able to develop writing across a broad range of subjects. This has been successful in developing a greater understanding of purpose and audience, which means pupils respond successfully to a variety of stimuli. Pupils are increasingly able to sustain their written responses, develop their fluency and show an understanding of how to structure their writing well.
- The second line of enquiry considered the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve the progress that disadvantaged pupils make. Leaders understand the barriers that exist for disadvantaged pupils and have identified actions to address these. However, leaders do not monitor these closely enough and teachers do not plan routinely to support pupils who fall behind. For example, where pupils are not secure in their basic mathematical knowledge they do not consolidate their skills and accurately apply these independently. Pupils often do not act on the feedback that teachers provide, despite the school's expectation that they do so. Consequently, as disadvantaged pupils move through key stage 2, their progress slows and this has meant that achievement in writing and mathematics has been in the lowest 5% of schools nationally in 2016 and 2017.
- Younger pupils increasingly achieve well, but too few go on to demonstrate a greater depth in their understanding. This is because teachers' planning does not take into account pupils' starting points. The most able pupils are not given sufficient time to complete tasks that would provide greater challenge.
- The final line of enquiry centred on the capacity of leaders to drive the improvements required, particularly as they have been slow to resolve the issues identified at the beginning of the inspection. Leaders are clearly committed to the success of the school and share an understanding of improvement priorities. However, challenges still remain as they have not been rigorous enough in ensuring that agreed strategies are consistently employed to improve attainment and progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements in the quality of teaching are consistently implemented and sustained so that pupils make better progress from their starting points, particularly in writing
- teachers' skills are developed so they are able to identify misconceptions and routinely plan work that matches the learning needs of pupils
- leaders' self-evaluation is further developed so that the impact of actions is outlined with more precision, particularly the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, so that this group of pupils make stronger progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah McGinnis
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the beginning of the day, I met with you and your leadership team to agree key lines of enquiry. Following this, I visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' written work across a range of subjects and age groups, jointly with leaders. I met with members of the leadership team and representatives from the governing body, and spoke with pupils. I also spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority. I scrutinised documentation provided by the school, including policies relating to safeguarding. When making final judgements, I considered 53 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 14 responses to the staff questionnaire and 50 responses to the questionnaire for pupils, provided by Ofsted.