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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Miss Kate Wagner
Principal
Bentley West Primary School Additionally Resourced for Hearing Impaired
Monmouth Road
Bentley
Walsall
West Midlands
WS2 0EQ

Dear Miss Wagner

Short inspection of Bentley West Primary School Additionally Resourced for Hearing Impaired

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 2018 with Elizabeth Ellis-Martin, 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 September 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.**

You started supporting the school in the autumn term, 2017, before being formally appointed as principal in March 2018. You have helped to provide stability through several personnel changes. Prior to your arrival, there was a decline in the quality of teaching and leadership. You have worked hard with other senior leaders to identify and start to address the weaknesses. Early indications show that some of this work is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching. However, some new initiatives have not had time to become embedded. Consequently, pupils' attainment, particularly in key stage 2, is not yet high enough.

There is purpose and capacity in the leadership of the school. The governing body and the senior leadership team have a realistic and transparent view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Last academic year's school improvement plan was effective because it instigated a range of urgent and necessary changes. However, the current plan has too many priorities and does not put a sufficient depth of focus on the most important current priorities. For example, the process for improving the teaching of mathematics is not clear enough.

You, and other senior leaders, have improved the frequency and quality of checks to evaluate the quality of teaching. Teachers receive precise and timely feedback on how they can improve aspects of their teaching. Sometimes, teachers do not receive feedback on how they have addressed previous development points.

The quality of teaching across the school is too variable, particularly in key stage 2. Sometimes, teachers set work that does not take sufficient account of pupils' prior understanding. When this occurs, there is not enough challenge. Furthermore, some teachers do not intervene effectively to address misconceptions during lessons or to move pupils on who are finding work too easy.

There is a strong sense of togetherness among staff, pupils and parents. Several staff and parents commented positively to inspectors about the direction in which the school is now heading.

Outcomes in the early years and in key stage 1 are generally positive. By the end of Reception, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is in line with the national average. Staff in the early years have strong relationships with children and foster a sense of enjoyment in children's learning experiences. Language and communication skills are developed well.

The governing body identified why the decline in provision occurred and has a clear understanding of what it needs to do to prevent it happening again. Governors have raised the level of challenge in meetings and on their visits to the school. In the last 12 months, they have made good use of external reviews from the local authority and from a separately commissioned improvement adviser.

Some of the areas for improvement outlined at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. Marking is consistent with the school policy. The system for tracking and analysing pupils' attainment is extremely well organised. Leaders and teachers use this information with increasing effectiveness.

Behaviour is positive in lessons and at social times. Pupils are ambassadors for the school and proud of the work that they produce. They also spoke to inspectors with great enthusiasm about the range of wider opportunities that they receive. Pupils have a good understanding of different faiths and cultures. The curriculum is enhanced with a wide range of trips and the extra-curricular programme is varied. Pupils spoke positively about clubs such as choir, sign language, French, art, chess and a range of different sports clubs.

You have maintained a positive focus on foundation subjects. A physical education (PE) specialist works alongside teachers to help improve their understanding of teaching PE. Music also features prominently in the curriculum.

The deaf resource provision is a strength of the school. Staff are skilled, attentive and determined. Pupils are fully integrated into mainstream lessons and feel part of the school. This is blended well with the valuable time pupils spend together in the resource base.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and staff have ensured that safeguarding pupils is a key feature of the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are safety conscious and take their responsibilities very seriously. Frequent and relevant training ensures that staff are crystal clear on current guidance. They raise concerns quickly and appropriately. Regular updates take place on specific topics such as child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the deputy DSL are vigilant and effective in their work. Concerns are followed up tenaciously and external agencies are involved in a timely way.

Pupils feel safe and are taught how to keep themselves safe. They have a particularly strong understanding of e-safety and how to avoid the dangers that are associated with the internet. Pupils take safety seriously because it is given a high profile in assemblies and in the curriculum.

Inspection findings

- Attainment in mathematics was not high enough in 2016 and 2017. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards by the end of key stages 1 and 2 was below the national average. You responded to this by putting in place a new approach to teaching of mathematics. This approach enables pupils to use practical apparatus more frequently and apply their understanding to different problems. Attainment rose in 2018 at the end of key stage 1. However, it declined slightly in key stage 2. The new approaches are not yet fully embedded, so pupils are not consistently challenged, particularly in relation to using and recording their reasoning skills.
- You and the leadership team monitor the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils closely. Your assessment information shows that some disadvantaged pupils' progress is accelerating. However, not enough pupils are reaching the expected standards by the end of key stage 2. Some of the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching have had an impact on their progress. The pupil premium funding is targeted on additional provision for disadvantaged pupils. However, leaders and governors do not fully evaluate the specific impact of this additional support. Therefore, it is difficult to identify where the premium is proving most successful.
- Your work to raise standards in reading has started to have a positive impact. The culture for reading has been raised across the school. Pupils are enthused by the different books that they read and can identify their favourite authors. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were deeply engrossed in their class text by the author Michael Morpurgo. Staff asked probing questions to pupils and they enjoyed proving their understanding of the text.
- Attainment for reading has started to rise. At the end of key stage 2 in 2018, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standards rose closer to the level seen nationally. There is still some work to do though. Pupils' books do not demonstrate strong evidence of their progress in reading comprehension skills.

This is because the reading sessions do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to record their understanding of the texts that they read.

- At the end of key stage 2 over the last two years, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test has been below the national average. In classrooms where the quality of teaching is strong, the technical aspects of writing develop well. However, this is not a consistent picture and some pupils lack accuracy in their work. You have not yet had time to put in place a consistent approach to the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvement plan is refined so that the most important priorities are focused on with sufficient depth
- teachers receive feedback on how well they have addressed their previous development points
- provision for disadvantaged pupils is targeted and evaluated more effectively
- teachers provide a consistent level of challenge in mathematics, particularly in developing pupils' reasoning skills
- pupils receive more regular opportunities to record and demonstrate their reading comprehension skills
- teachers intervene in a timely way to support pupils' misunderstandings, or to move pupils on to more challenging work
- pupils apply their understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling with increasing accuracy.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Meckin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and several other leaders. I met with three governors and spoke to a representative from the local authority. We spoke to pupils informally and formally. We made short visits to 12 lessons and looked at a range of pupils' books. We spoke to parents at the start of the day and

considered 10 free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also considered the responses to the online questionnaire completed by pupils and staff.

I scrutinised various documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the improvement plan and the documents that you use to check the quality of teaching. You shared with me the most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. We discussed the national test results and assessments undertaken by pupils. I also looked at the school's published information on the website, as well as minutes of governing body meetings and information about attendance, behaviour and safety.