

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



24 October 2018

David Ribbins
Principal
Woodvale Primary Academy
Crestwood Road
Lings Way
Northampton
Northamptonshire
NN3 8JJ

Dear Mr Ribbins

Short inspection of Woodvale Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 9 October 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 October 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.**

Since starting as principal in January 2018, you, alongside your new deputy principal, have accurately identified areas that need to be improved. You have developed strong links, not only through the Greenwood Academies Trust, but with a wider group of schools. You organise regular meetings for leaders and teaching staff to work with other schools, to compare pupils' work and to reach agreement on judgements made about pupils' attainment. This helps to ensure that information gathered in school to check on pupils' attainment and the progress that pupils are making is accurate. You have also used what you have learned from visits to other schools to help shape your school improvement plans.

You recognise the leadership potential in your staff and offer the necessary support to help them progress further in their careers. You have recently put together a team of leaders for English to drive improvement across the school. The impact of this team's work this term has just begun to be evident in the improvements, particularly in reading.

Developments to middle leadership are relatively new and middle and senior leaders have not had time to check the impact of initiatives on pupils' progress. This includes monitoring the provision for disadvantaged pupils, who are not making as much progress as other pupils nationally by the end of key stage 2.

At the time of the last inspection you were asked to improve the progress made by the less able pupils, especially in key stage 1. Where needed, you and the leadership team support staff well by working alongside them to model effective practice in the classroom. This has ensured that teachers understand the range of needs in their classes. The environment is highly creative and inspiring for the pupils, with links to the theme of learning planned to take place. For example, Year 6 classrooms are set up as air-raid shelters to match the Second World War themes they are studying. However, sometimes teachers in key stages 1 and 2 are not using their knowledge of what pupils can do well enough to challenge all pupils.

Pupils I spoke with told me that they are happy at school and enjoy their learning. They like and trust their teachers and feel that there is always someone they can talk to. Pupils enjoy the many trips and visits; one pupil told me that a recent trip helped her add depth to her writing. They recognise how these experiences help their learning. Most pupils behave well and are polite and play well together. However, very occasionally a very small proportion of pupils demonstrate some challenging behaviour.

The trust offers a range of support packages which the school has accessed, for example the middle leadership programme. There are regular school improvement advisor visits from the trust that have helped you develop effective plans for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

All staff are vigilant of pupils' welfare and they have positive relationships with them. Staff receive regular training and know the signs of possible concern to look out for when checking on pupils' welfare. They know the correct procedures to follow should they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being or if allegations are made about a member of staff.

Safeguarding records are detailed. You and the human resources director of the trust make checks to ensure that they remain robust. The trust supports the school bursar well through regular communication and access to updated resources. Pupils feel that behaviour is good in school and they told me that they feel safe at school. A postbox system allows children to raise concerns and these are dealt with quickly by a dedicated learning support assistant.

Inspection findings

- The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was below the national average in 2017 and 2018. In addition, too few pupils attain the higher standard.
- You have implemented initiatives to bring about improvements to the teaching of reading across the school. For example, you have set up a new library with a good range of high-quality books. All pupils now have a reading record and teachers encourage pupils to read at home. Teachers ensure that they teach the skills of reading and use quality texts as a basis for learning. Your assessment

information shows that pupils have made better progress in reading compared to previous years and in 2018 the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading is higher than in 2017.

- The new English leadership team has looked closely at the way that writing is taught across the school. Pupils now spend longer on set novels, allowing pupils to explore a book and develop their writing in small steps. There is clear guidance in place for teachers with information on the key skills they should be teaching to each year group. However, sometimes teachers do not provide precise information for pupils to help them improve their work further. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are sometimes not high enough. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in writing at key stage 1 rose in 2018. However, it has declined at key stage 2.
- Sometimes in mathematics tasks given to pupils by teachers are not consistently challenging enough for them to be able to do well, particularly for the most able. Teachers do not consistently move pupils on to more challenging work quickly enough. Consequently, these pupils do not make the progress that they should. For example, in a Year 2 lesson where pupils were using containers of water to explore the concept of greater than and less than, some pupils quickly completed the task and started to play with the water.
- The progress of pupils entitled to pupil premium funding does not match the progress of all other pupils nationally. You have clear action plans in place and you have begun to make changes to how these pupils are supported. However, your actions have not yet shown impact upon the progress that these pupils make.
- Your family support worker develops good links with more vulnerable families and signposts parents and carers to support in the community. You run courses for parents such as English and computer skills. You have a breakfast club aimed at supporting more vulnerable pupils and improving their attendance. You have worked hard to improve the attendance of more vulnerable pupils and attendance across the school has improved.
- Occasionally, the behaviour policy is not always effective in supporting staff to manage the rare incidents of poor behaviour. While you have tried hard to garner further advice and support from the local authority and other agencies, these pupils are not always supported well enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use their knowledge of what children can already do and build in greater challenge at all levels to accelerate progress, particularly in writing
- leaders at all levels monitor support in the classroom for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that they make strong progress to bring them to be at least in line with national expectations
- middle leaders have rigorous plans in place to monitor effectively the impact of their actions on pupils' progress

- leaders carefully evaluate the effectiveness of the behaviour policy to ensure that all pupils receive the most appropriate support for their needs.

I am copying this letter to the executive board and the chief executive officer of GAT, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Ellers
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this short inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, three members of the trust and the school bursar. I spoke with pupils on the playground and in lessons and I also met with two groups of Year 5 and 6 pupils. You and I visited classes together to observe learning taking place. I also spoke with several parents as they brought their children to school. I considered the views of parents through their responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. I took into consideration the views of all your staff from the Ofsted staff survey.

Together with your English subject leaders we examined a range of pupils' work books. I scrutinised school documentation, including that related to the safeguarding of pupils, the school behaviour policy and behaviour logs. I also looked at the school's improvement plan, self-evaluation, data and tracking information.