

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



7 November 2018

Mr Richard Pawson
Headteacher
Wood Bank School
Dene View
Luddendenfoot
Halifax
West Yorkshire
HX2 6PB

Dear Mr Pawson

Short inspection of Wood Bank School

Following my visit to the school on 24 October 2018 with Tricia Stevens, 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 February 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 a dedicated and committed headteacher and are uncompromising in your desire for the school to continually improve. You are well supported by your deputy headteacher who is as determined as you are to provide the best possible learning experiences for your pupils. Despite recent turbulence and staffing changes you have kept your resolve and have ensured that your pupils are at the heart of all that you do.

Your vision and ambition for the school are clearly established. Staff share your vision and commend the many positive changes that have taken place since the last inspection. They work hard to support you and understand the need for continuous improvement. Consequently, they build extremely positive relationships with pupils and their parents. Pupils are happy and content. They enjoy coming to school. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Parents are unanimous in their appreciation of the work you do to support them and their children. One parent noted: 'It's a wonderful school and my daughter has made good progress since being there. They communicate well with me and the range of activities are creative, appropriate and provide good opportunities for growth and development.'

Improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are having a positive impact on the progress of pupils. Because Wood Bank is a small school,

teachers know their pupils very well. The clear majority adapt plans as necessary to provide highly individualised learning programmes. Most pupils are making strong progress, particularly in their communication and cognition skills. However, this strong progress is not yet consistent enough. You are already taking appropriate measures to address the inconsistency, but these need to move at a more rapid rate. You have plans to build on the systems used to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. It would be beneficial if these were swiftly put in place.

You have developed a strong training programme for staff. You are taking measures to ensure that all staff are aware of the changing nature of their roles within school. Staff take immense pride in their work. They enjoy the opportunities that are available to them. Most teachers and other staff have high aspirations for their pupils. Where this is not the case you are aware and have plans to increase the aspirations of all.

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is excellent. Pupils are kind, polite and respectful. They are welcoming and happy to speak to visitors. Pupils are inquisitive and take delight in learning about others. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and behaviour.

You have made positive strides toward achieving the areas for improvement identified in your last inspection report. The changing needs of pupils has meant that the school is continuously adapting and changing. Where necessary, adults have access to signs and symbols to aid communication. The school environment is positive; displays encouraging positive attitudes and behaviour are prominently placed alongside those showing pupils' work.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is very strong, you have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your safeguarding team is confident and very knowledgeable. Staff know each pupil individually and understand the difficulties that may arise. These are dealt with quickly and efficiently. The team is unwavering in their determination to ensure the best safeguarding outcomes for pupils.

The leadership team has developed a sound culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained and understand the need of safeguarding the vulnerable pupils that they care for. Staff understand the signs of neglect and abuse. They are aware of the procedures to follow if they have a concern about a pupil. Staff are confident that the safeguarding team will follow up all concerns and take the appropriate actions.

Due to the special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities of the pupils there are many external agencies and professionals involved. The school works exceptionally well with them and promotes the importance of a collaborative approach.

Pupils feel safe and enjoy lessons which teach them how to keep themselves safe in different situations, for example crossing the road and using the internet. They know that they can tell adults if they have any worries or are uncomfortable in any

situation.

Inspection findings

- Leaders encourage parents to make sure that their children attend school regularly. Attendance is improving, but there are still some cases where parents take their children on extended holidays during term time. Leaders are aware of this and are working with the local authority to seek a solution.
- The curriculum has been well planned in three tiers to address the needs of those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and those who have SEN and/or disabilities but can function at a higher level, including those with moderate learning difficulties. The curriculum fully encompasses all areas of communication and cognition, independence, physical need and the academic strands of English and mathematics.
- Most pupils make good progress from their starting points; some make strong progress. Those who are making the least amount of progress are doing so because of the inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Most-able pupils are not always challenged enough in their learning.
- Teachers use the targets set in pupils' education, health and care plans well. They ensure that their planning of lessons and activities contributes positively to the achievement of targets. Staff break down long-term targets into smaller, more manageable ones. Where possible, pupils are aware of their targets and are given positive advice on how to achieve them.
- Leaders use additional funding for sports and disadvantaged pupils very effectively to provide a wide-ranging series of events and activities. These enhance learning and enable pupils to practise the skills they have learned. The impact of the additional funding contributes to the progress pupils make.
- Social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) aspects of learning are implicit throughout the curriculum. The new SMSC lead is clear in her ambitions to further promote SMSC. She has firm plans and is keen to develop a deeper understanding of this aspect of learning.
- Governors support the ethos of the school well. They support leaders with determination to provide the best learning experiences for the pupils. Governors provide challenge to leaders; however, this is not always robust enough. Governors do not spend enough time in school to enable them to have a deep understanding of all aspects of the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors take a more active role in school life to further develop their understanding of the school, enabling them to provide robust challenge to school leaders
- they increase the consistency of high-quality teaching to improve the progress of

all pupils

- most-able pupils are set work which challenges and stretches their thinking and understanding, enabling them to achieve as well as they can.

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

Yours sincerely

Sara Roe
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the inspectors discussed the work of the school with you, the deputy headteacher and the safeguarding team. Inspectors also talked to the school's improvement partner and the chair of the governing body. We examined information about pupils' progress and looked at pupils' workbooks carefully. The inspection team checked a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, external evaluations of aspects of the school's work, the school's development plan and minutes of meetings of the management committee. We considered five written responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and 36 responses to the staff questionnaire. The team visited all classes to observe teaching, learning and assessment. They were sometimes accompanied by you or your deputy headteacher. A formal discussion was held with five pupils. Both inspectors talked more informally to pupils in lessons, around school and at breaktime.