

9 January 2019

Mrs Andrea Poole
Headteacher
Mab's Cross Primary School
Standishgate
Wigan
Lancashire
WN1 1XL

Dear Mrs Poole

Short inspection of Mab's Cross Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 December 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. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since the previous inspection, you, the senior leadership team and the governing body have taken the school from strength to strength. You have restructured the school's senior leadership team. Ably supported by this capable team, you have focused your efforts on further improving teaching and learning so that pupils achieve well across the school now compared to their peers nationally. The reconstituted governing body knows the school well. It provides highly effective support and challenge to you and your leadership team. This has expedited the marked improvement in pupils' attainment and progress over the past four years.

Pupils, parents and carers and staff agree that Mab's Cross is a 'fantastic school'. Your school instils a love of learning in all of its pupils. Pupils are very quick to settle down to work, listen attentively to their teachers and take great pride in their achievements. Pupils were keen to talk to me about their learning. They were highly knowledgeable about the topics that they had studied this term. Pupils and staff were keen to show me the vibrant displays around the school, which showcase pupils' wealth of learning across the curriculum.

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils behave well in lessons, around school and when out on trips, such as their visit to the local church. They are pleasant, polite and quick to lend a hand to anyone in need of assistance. For example, they are very keen to help each other with tricky problems in mathematics. Pupils get on well together. They thoroughly enjoy working collaboratively on independent research projects, such as in history. Pupils are supportive of their peers with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) as well as those classmates who are dealing with personal challenges such as bereavement or family breakdown.

Staff morale is high. Staff are proud to work at your school. They work very well together to plan lessons which enthuse and engage their pupils. They relish the opportunities you give them to support and help each other. Middle leaders take their responsibilities seriously. For example, the history and geography leader provides teachers with frequent training and support and detailed subject plans for each year group. This subject leader also carries out regular checks on pupils' work. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning in these subjects has improved considerably recently.

Staff actively encourage parents to get involved in school life. During my visit, the local church was filled with families who joined their children for the carol service. Families enjoy taking part in the school's 'reading champions' challenge. Most pupils are now reading to an adult at home at least three times a week. Moreover, classrooms are filled with the fruits of pupils' labour on their homework projects, such as model space rockets.

At the previous inspection, the inspectors asked you to improve teaching and pupils' progress. Your two deputy headteachers work well with their colleagues to ensure that teaching is of a consistently high standard across the school. Teaching staff value the training that they receive to hone their skills. They appreciate the useful feedback they receive following lesson observations. Moreover, they find it helpful when they are given the chance to observe their colleagues. Across the school, pupils make strong progress from their different starting points.

The inspectors also asked you to improve the quality of leadership and management. You and your leadership team constantly check on the impact of your actions on raising standards. You use evidence from a range of different sources to evaluate how successful your actions have been, for example lesson observations, checks on work in pupils' books and pupil progress meetings. Furthermore, governors have capitalised on the reconstitution of the governing body so that they make an effective contribution to evaluating the impact of your actions.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders' thorough checks ensure that staff are suitable to work with children and pupils prior to starting work at the school. All staff receive frequent training to ensure that they understand and carry out their responsibilities well. Staff follow up any concerns meticulously, signposting pupils and their families to

any help and support needed. Moreover, pupils have good relationships with their teachers and other members of staff. Pupils agree that they have trusted adults they would talk to if they had any worries.

The learning mentor is an invaluable asset to the school. She provides a wealth of support to pupils and their families, for example helping those families who struggle to get their children to school.

Staff make sure that they teach pupils how to keep themselves safe. For example, younger pupils understand how to cross roads safely, while older pupils are aware of the risks of drugs and alcohol and how to deal with peer pressure. A very small minority of parents and pupils are concerned about bullying. Staff and pupils who spoke to me felt that any rare incidents were dealt with effectively by staff. The school's own records confirm that any possible bullying incidents are investigated thoroughly and the pupils involved are supported well. Pupils, parents and staff agree that pupils are well cared for and safe at Mab's Cross.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was whether the governing body is providing an appropriate balance of support and challenge. The governing body took decisive action following the previous inspection. It prioritised the recruitment and training of new members to ensure a suitable balance of experience and expertise. This reconstituted governing body supports and challenges you and other leaders effectively on all relevant aspects of the school's work. Governors make sure that they have the information they need to know how well the school is doing. Governors use their visits to the school, as well as formal meetings, to question leaders and to check on the effectiveness of leaders' actions. Consequently, the governing body is successfully contributing to the school's marked improvement since the previous inspection.
- My second line of enquiry was about how well the school's curriculum supports pupils' learning and progress. The investment that you and governors have made in this aspect of the school's work has paid dividends. Staff have thought carefully about what their pupils need to learn. They have paid heed to the requirements of the national curriculum, the school's local context and the interests of both staff and pupils. Teaching staff think carefully about what they need to teach and the best way to teach it. You and your senior and middle leaders make sure that teaching staff have the resources, guidance and support that they need to do their jobs well.
- Pupils relish the range of subjects they are taught. Pupils talked to me enthusiastically about what they had learned this term in history, geography, science and mathematics. They proudly showed me their books to demonstrate the considerable progress they had made across a range of subjects, including art, English and technology. Your subject leaders have a deep understanding of how well their subjects are being taught. You and your senior and middle leaders continually refine and improve the school's curriculum to make sure it meets the needs of your pupils. Consequently, the curriculum is a strength of the school

and promotes pupils' achievement across a wide range of subjects very well.

- My third line of enquiry was about whether leaders have improved the rates of progress of the most able pupils. You keep a close eye on the progress of all pupils. At termly progress meetings with teachers, you review how well each pupil is getting on. You ensure that the most able pupils do not waste time on tasks that are too easy. Teachers now assess pupils' prior learning before planning any new topics. Teachers use this information to plan work which provides sufficient challenge and helps pupils, including the most able, to build on what they already know and can do. Bespoke intervention groups help lower-ability pupils to catch up and keep up, as well as deepen the understanding of the most able pupils. Your most able pupils rate highly the opportunities for independent research, peer coaching and wrestling with tricky problems. Across the school, more pupils are working at the higher standards and greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of each key stage compared to their peers nationally.
- My fourth line of enquiry was about how well leaders use pupil premium funding to help disadvantaged pupils overcome their barriers to learning. As I found with my third line of enquiry, you keep a close eye on the progress and attainment of all pupils. You make sure that pupils have the additional support to help them be successful, if they need it. You use the additional funding to increase the number of teaching staff to provide extra support in classrooms and facilitate intervention programmes. Moreover, you make sure that eligible pupils get financial help so that they can take part in a wealth of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, including residential trips. Consequently, these pupils achieve well compared to their classmates and other pupils nationally against most performance measures. However, you, your senior leaders and governors cannot be certain that the additional funding is routinely used to provide support above and beyond what is in place for all pupils. Moreover, you cannot be sure that the support you put in place is what will make the greatest difference for these pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- further improve the effectiveness of pupil premium spending by focusing more sharply on the use of the funding to help disadvantaged pupils of all abilities perform better.

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

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, senior leaders, teaching and support staff, and the chair and members of the governing body. I also spoke to a representative of the local authority. I considered the 79 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I met formally with a group of staff and considered the 29 responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff. I considered the 58 responses to Ofsted's online survey of pupils, talked informally to pupils throughout the school day, and met formally with a group of pupils.

I visited classrooms and checked on pupils' work, both in books and on wall displays. I looked at information about pupils' progress and attainment, and the school's self-evaluation and action plan, as well as a range of other documentation.

I conducted a review of safeguarding, including an evaluation of the school's policies and procedures to keep pupils safe, training, recruitment checks and record-keeping.