

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



11 January 2019

Mr Diggory Vowles
Headteacher
Lipson Vale Primary School
Bernice Terrace
Lipson
Plymouth
Devon
PL4 7HW

Dear Mr Vowles

Short inspection of Lipson Vale Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 2015.

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.**

The school is a lively and vibrant environment where pupils' well-being is of equal importance as their academic progress. Pupils are happy in school and told me that 'friendship week' teaches them strong moral values. They are polite and respectful and value the relationships they have with each other and with adults.

Pupils are focused and apply themselves positively to their learning. During the inspection, pupils told me that there has been bullying in school in the past. However, since your introduction of 'peer mediators' and initiatives such as 'anti-bullying week', pupils say that bullying is now rare.

The majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are positive about the school. However, a small minority of parents do not agree that the school is well led and managed. They expressed concerns regarding communication and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Current pupils with SEND are not making good progress.

You have addressed most of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You now work closely with your deputy headteacher and middle leaders to ensure that they are driving forward school improvement. Middle leaders for

English and mathematics help teachers to use a wide range of teaching strategies. Teachers speak positively about the recent subject-support hubs, established by middle leaders to provide support and professional dialogue. Standards of presentation in pupils' work across the school are high. However, provision for the most able pupils in mathematics across key stage 2 remains too variable.

You have a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, some of the school's record keeping lacks precision and leaders' responses to identified weaknesses have not been swift enough. For example, monitoring visits from the local authority identified that the most able pupils' outcomes in mathematics and pupils' attendance were not good enough. This remains the case. Likewise, governors are aware of the weaknesses of the school, but have not responded adequately. For example, they are aware that disadvantaged pupils have not made sufficient progress, but are not able to provide any strategic oversight of the impact of additional funding. Although governors are fully committed to the school, they are not clear about how to evaluate the impact of leaders' work to address weaker areas.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. New online approaches to record keeping are working well and the system allows the safeguarding team to access information easily and provide regular updates when necessary.

Although previous work has been effective, further work needs to be done to ensure that all staff are fully aware of the changes made to the guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2018). Furthermore, leaders' records of staff training and qualifications are not sharp enough.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. They value the opportunities that leaders provide, such as 'stay safe week', and assemblies where they learn about internet safety and 'stranger danger'.

Inspection findings

- The first focus for this inspection was to find out how well leaders' actions have ensured that teaching is sufficiently challenging, in particular for disadvantaged pupils and boys, in reading and writing across key stage 1. This is because in 2017 and 2018, the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher standard at the end of Year 2 was below the national average.
- Current pupils, however, are making stronger progress in their writing from their different starting points, as their work shows. The most able pupils can write at length and use their writing skills with growing confidence. The quality of writing across key stage 1 is strong.
- You have placed a priority on developing pupils' reading for pleasure and enjoyment. Pupils report that they enjoy the challenge the new reading scheme brings. However, pupils in Year 1, who are not involved in the new reading

scheme, are not developing their reading as effectively. Year 1 pupils do not have reading books that are closely matched to their age or ability. Some pupils are not able to use their phonic skills to decode unfamiliar words. This is weakening their progress in reading over time.

- My second line of enquiry focused on the progress that boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND make in mathematics. In 2018, outcomes in mathematics dipped significantly, and the progress that pupils made from their starting points was well below the national average. Current pupils' work shows that teachers do not use their assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do skilfully enough. Too often, work is not matched to their ability. As a result, pupils' progress is hampered. Senior leaders and governors are aware that there is more to do to ensure that key stage 2 pupils are challenged to reach their full potential.
- The school has a higher proportion of pupils with SEND than is found nationally. Recently, the SEND coordinator has focused her work on the restructuring and reorganisation of the provision for these pupils. However, leaders have not monitored or evaluated the quality of provision that these pupils are receiving with sufficient rigour. The support on offer is not always effective. Consequently, pupils with SEND do not make good enough progress from their starting points.
- We also looked in depth at the quality of the school's work to develop the reading of disadvantaged pupils and boys across key stage 2. Published attainment information for 2018 showed a significant decline compared with 2017. You have implemented a number of initiatives to raise the profile of reading in the school and these are starting to take shape. Pupils read fluently and use their reading skills to answer questions related to the texts they read. Leaders communicate their expectations about reading at home effectively, which helps to develop pupils' reading further.
- I also explored pupils' attendance and the rates of pupil exclusions. For the past three years, attendance has been below the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils who have been persistently absent has been above the national average. During the inspection, I found that office and support staff check the attendance of pupils regularly. The school's parent support adviser works closely with families to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. However, the measures that you have put in place have not been effective. Current pupils' attendance, including that of pupils who are persistently absent, is declining even further below the national averages.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions has been higher than the national average in the past. Although you have sought advice from the local authority about how to reduce these, pupil exclusions continue to be high. Leaders' actions have not yet been effective. Fixed-term exclusions continue to be above the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers in key stage 2 use mathematics assessments skilfully to adjust their teaching, so that it is sufficiently challenging and better matched to pupils' needs
- they implement a clear strategic approach to the teaching of reading across Year 1, ensuring that the pupils' reading books are matched well to their ability
- pupils' absence, persistent absence and the number of fixed-term exclusions all reduce
- governors have a strategic approach to monitoring and evaluation, so that their view of school improvement is accurate and they hold leaders to account more stringently
- teaching and support for pupils with SEND enable them to make good progress from their starting points.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Middlemore
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held meetings with the deputy headteacher, middle leaders, the SEND coordinator, a representative of the local authority and two governors, including the chair of the governing body. I took into account the 31 responses to Parent View, including 23 free-text comments. I spoke with pupils formally and informally during the day. I also considered the 16 responses to the staff survey.

I observed teaching and learning jointly with the deputy headteacher. I looked at a range of pupils' work in their exercise books and in their classrooms. I scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the single central record, your school self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and current pupils' behaviour and attendance records.