

5 February 2019

Mrs Suzanne Cassidy
Spotland Primary School
Edmund Street
Rochdale
Lancashire
OL12 6QG

Dear Mrs Cassidy

Short inspection of Spotland Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 2019, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Spotland is a harmonious, purposeful and culturally diverse school, where new pupils settle quickly and enjoy learning. Pupils achieve well. They benefit from an exciting and rich curriculum which provides them with many new experiences. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 relish their annual residential learning opportunities, where they can develop their team working and leadership skills. Pupils enjoy kayaking, learning about the history of Rochdale, dance, drama, learning new languages and carrying out practical investigations in science.

Teachers are careful to ensure that pupils understand that no subject exists in isolation. This was exemplified recently during Pompeii Day, when pupils learned about natural disasters while developing their understanding of the history and geography of Europe. The event brought to life 'Escape from Pompeii', the book currently being read by pupils in lower key stage 2.

Fully supported by governors, senior leaders never turn pupils or families away. For this reason, the school is recognised for its inclusivity. Spotland Primary School is valued and respected by parents and carers, the community and the local authority.

You celebrate the fact that between them, pupils speak 36 different languages. Pupils often join the school at times other than the beginning of the academic year. Some pupils are asylum seekers and international new arrivals, and a few have experienced traumatic events. You, senior leaders and the family support worker

are prepared to do whatever it takes to help pupils and their families to flourish. For example, leaders and staff work successfully with a wide range of partners in areas such as health, social care, housing and legal services to benefit pupils and their parents.

Staff morale is high. This was evident from my discussion with middle leaders. They are acutely aware of school priorities, particularly in relation to raising pupils' attainment across the school. With senior leaders and governors, they are clear what actions the school is taking to improve the quality of pupils' education even further. They are appreciative of the many training and development opportunities available to them, many of which are helping to refine their leadership skills. Teachers and teaching assistants enjoy the rewards and challenges of working at Spotland. They understand the school's aims and aspirations. They say that senior leaders help them to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Parents are very supportive of the school. They were unanimous in their view that communication with the school is good. Typically, parents commented that, 'The teachers and senior leadership team are always available to talk to and are focused on meeting children's different needs.' All of those who completed Ofsted's online Parent View survey said that their children are safe and happy at school. Parents also said that they would recommend the school to others.

You have resolved many of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Most notably, you have enhanced the role of middle leaders, who are now fully involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Even so, not all learning activities are sufficiently challenging for pupils, especially for the most able.

Safeguarding is effective

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and there is a strong culture of keeping pupils safe in the school. You and other leaders leave nothing to chance when it comes to safeguarding. Leaders have excellent relationships with parents and outside agencies. All of the necessary checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are carried out diligently.

Designated safeguarding leaders are highly trained for their roles. All staff are familiar with the most recent guidelines on keeping pupils safe in education. Staff know how to spot signs of neglect and abuse. Procedures for staff to report any concerns are outlined clearly in the school's safeguarding policy and in displays on walls around the premises. All staff are familiar with the school's electronic systems for recording concerns about pupils, however small. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding review and respond to such information carefully.

Pupils told me that staff care for them very well. For example, one pupil said, 'Teachers are always around to make us feel safe at school and on school trips.' Pupils know that they can discuss their concerns with any member of staff or use the 'worry box' to alert staff of any issues. Pupils said that bullying is rare and always addressed by staff. Pupils know how to stay safe when online, for example

they informed me that, 'You don't talk to strangers online and should never give out your personal information.'

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry during the inspection related to the teaching of phonics. In recent years, the proportion of pupils secure in their phonics skills and knowledge at the end of Year 1 has been below average. You and your staff are taking effective action to address this matter.
- Teachers have recently benefited from training about how to teach children and pupils the sounds that letters make. This work has ensured that teachers take the same systematic approach to developing pupils' reading skills. I observed this when I visited Year 1 and the Reception classes. Pupils, and children in the early years, enjoy phonics sessions. They are learning essential skills to read new words. Their excellent behaviour ensures that no time is wasted in class; all pupils listen attentively to instructions. Staff make sure that children's and pupils' learning is enjoyable and memorable, for example by teaching the 'tricky word song'. Staff take many positive steps throughout the school to develop pupils' wider skills and passion for reading. For example, senior leaders recently took pupils' views into account when purchasing new books for the library. Even so, some pupils do not talk with confidence about the writing produced by a broad range of authors.
- My second line of enquiry focused on the performance of disadvantaged pupils. Pupils' books show that disadvantaged pupils in all year groups, including those new to the school, are making strong progress, particularly in developing their writing skills. Disadvantaged pupils are supported well by experienced and skilled teachers and teaching assistants. These pupils are engaged in learning and eager to participate in class. The pupil premium funding is being used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. You are not complacent. Determined action to raise disadvantaged pupils' attainment is evident across the school.
- My third line of enquiry centred on the school's work to increase pupils' attainment at the higher standard by the end of key stage 2, and at greater depth by the end of key stage 1. In mathematics, the quality of teaching is improving quickly as a result of effective leadership by the subject coordinator, as well as better planning of activities by staff. Nevertheless, some pupils do not apply their understanding of calculation well in other subjects.
- Pupils' 'curriculum books' show that they are beginning to grapple with difficult problem-solving activities across subjects, most of all in key stage 2. Even so, some pupils find that their work in English is sometimes too easy. In science, pupils are successfully deepening their skills, for example through practical investigations of solids, liquids and gases.
- My final line of enquiry related to pupils' attendance. You and other leaders help parents to understand that occasional absences by pupils mean lost time for learning and that extended absences are unacceptable. Your records show that current pupils' attendance is now average. There is no doubt that pupils enjoy coming to school. They wear their school uniform with pride and value

friendships with their peers and relationships with staff. Careful use is made of celebration assemblies, certificates for good attendance and the 'Timey Teddy' to celebrate pupils' good attendance. These actions are having a positive impact on improving attendance. Ultimately, the school's aim is, in your words, 'to work with families and always get to the root cause of poor attendance'.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils, especially the most able, are given work that challenges their learning in different subjects
- pupils understand the work of a wider range of authors
- pupils apply their calculation skills across the curriculum to deepen their understanding of mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Lenford White
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the senior leadership team. I also met with a group of middle leaders. You and I observed teaching in key stages 1 and 2. In addition, I observed phonics teaching in Year 1 and in the Reception classes. I met with a group of pupils and listened to some pupils read. I held a discussion with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority.

I examined various documents, including leaders' plans for the pupil premium funding, and information on pupils' performance. With senior leaders, I reviewed a sample of pupils' work. I looked at some school policies, including those for safeguarding, behaviour and the curriculum. I spoke with some parents at the start of the school day. I considered 16 free-text messages from parents and 16 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I scrutinised 40 responses from staff to an Ofsted questionnaire and 124 responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey. I also considered your own surveys of the views of parents and pupils.