

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 April 2019

Mrs Linda Mortimer
Executive Headteacher
Saltergate Infant School
Newby Crescent
Harrogate
North Yorkshire
HG3 2TT

Dear Mrs Mortimer

Short inspection of Saltergate Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 26 March 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your passionate and purposeful leadership has successfully created a nurturing, friendly and inclusive school, where the pupils are known and valued as individuals. Leaders, including governors, are not complacent but reflective and attentive to the changing needs of the pupils. Consequently, the school continues to go from strength to strength. Saltergate is, as your mission statement states, an 'inclusive, imaginative and innovative' school.

Staff are very supportive of you. All members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey say that they enjoy working at the school and that they are proud to do so. Your collective and collaborative approach to leadership has been a key part of the developments in the school. As a result, there is a tangible team spirit among all staff. At the last inspection, inspectors highlighted that middle leaders were not playing a full enough part in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the subjects for which they were responsible. You have successfully addressed this issue. Leaders are now empowered and enabled to bring about successful improvements in their areas of responsibility. Consequently, middle leadership is now a strength of the school, and leaders' actions are having a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment.

Inspectors also asked leaders to accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards further in writing and mathematics, by ensuring that pupils know how to be successful in their learning. Leaders have adopted a clear, systematic and consistent approach to children's pencil control and the formation of letters and numerals.

Staff in the early years ensure that children have numerous opportunities for mark making and early writing. However, it is invariably the writing element that prevents a significant proportion of children from achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year. Consequently, the proportion of Reception children achieving a good level of development in 2018 was below the national average.

Pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics have improved. In 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in mathematics was in line with the national average. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard was below the national average. Despite improvements, pupils struggle to use their reasoning and problem-solving skills, because they lack the necessary mathematical vocabulary and terminology. As a result, they do not achieve as highly in mathematics as they do in reading and writing.

The strong teaching of reading and writing across the school means that increasing proportions of pupils make good progress. Your assessments are focused and accurate. Teachers know their pupils well. As a result, they are able to spot and tackle misconceptions in pupils' learning, quickly and effectively.

Governors are highly committed and dedicated to the school. They know the school well and are resolute in their desire to see Saltergate Infant School continually improve. Governors work very closely with you and other leaders. They carry out regular visits to the school, talking to staff, pupils and parents. They attend regular training and ensure that they are well informed about all aspects of the school's work. As a result, they offer you and other leaders an appropriate balance of challenge and support.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Acting as designated safeguarding leader, you are highly efficient in helping pupils to stay safe. Staff understand how to alert leaders to any concerns that they have. Referrals are made in a timely manner. Recently revised systems ensure that records about pupils are well organised and detailed.

You recently arranged for a local authority audit and review of safeguarding within the school. Leaders have already acted upon the small number of recommendations. This is further evidence of your commitment to making safeguarding your highest priority.

You work effectively with external agencies to promote pupils' safety and provide support for pupils' families as necessary. Where there are concerns about children's welfare or safety, you are tenacious in following these through. Leaders are not afraid to challenge other agencies in order to provide the high-quality support that your pupils deserve. Pre-employment checks and records to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are well organised. However, documentation to show that leaders and governors ask searching questions regarding safeguarding of candidates at interview is not always evident.

Parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View agreed that their children are safe and happy at the school.

Inspection findings

- The children in the two-year-old and Nursery provision are excited by their learning. They play together well and are keen to investigate new things or activities. Children start in the Nursery and the Reception class with skills that are below what is typical. This is especially evident in the areas of speech, language and writing. You have introduced a number of strategies in order to improve children's skills in this crucial area. The 'Chatterbox', a speech and language-focused intervention, provides both support and therapy. Leaders have ensured that key members of staff have received appropriate training. When I visited the Nursery during the inspection, a small group of children were very keen to tell me the story of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'. They were able to explain how this linked to their learning about life cycles. As a result, children's communication skills are improving.
- When I visited the Reception class, the children were captivated and enthused by their work about the 'Ugly Duckling' story. Staff take every opportunity to engage children in conversation and to extend their vocabulary. The children were keen to tell me the story and to show me the story books that they had created. The children were inquisitive and keen to learn. Despite evident strengths in early years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year has, since the last inspection, invariably been below the national average.
- There is no formal morning break or playtime for the children. Instead, leaders have adopted a model of continuous provision, where that time is given over to a diverse range of learning activities. This meticulously planned series of activities is carefully linked to the skills and knowledge that pupils need to support the learning in their lessons. Pupils' engagement is strong. We visited a group of Year 1 and 2 pupils working in the 'Atelier' making matchstick men from sticks, reflecting on their learning about the art of L S Lowry. Meanwhile, in the outdoor area, other pupils were using their measuring skills, and commenting on how things were taller or shorter, the tallest or shortest. Staff also use this time to actively support pupils' social development, encouraging them to share and take turns. Consequently, the additional focused activities are leading to improved confidence and self-awareness, effectively supporting pupils' progress in their lessons.
- Teachers' strong knowledge and high expectations have helped children in Reception and pupils in Year 1 to make strong progress in phonics. Teachers introduce new sounds that letters make precisely and ensure that children's pronunciation is accurate. Repetition enables children to secure their knowledge deeply before moving on in their learning. Songs about the 'cheeky chimp' or the 'sheep who needs a shave' help the children to recap their phonic knowledge. Teachers assess progress carefully and address any misconceptions promptly. Consequently, most pupils use their strong understanding of phonics to decode

texts and apply their phonics skills to writing. Additional support for those pupils in Year 2 who did not achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check enables them to catch up. As a result, they are well prepared for key stage 2.

- Leaders have ensured that books are well matched to pupils' reading ability. This gives pupils confidence and success in reading from the outset. Pupils read well because they have a strong understanding of how to use their phonics skills and knowledge to segment and blend unfamiliar words. The pupils who read to me during the inspection were able to work out the meaning of 'chit chat' and 'crouched', but struggled over the words, 'squelchy', 'faint' and 'beckoned'. Pupils apply their phonics skills effectively to their writing and develop into strong writers by the end of Year 2. Consequently, phonics is a strength at the school.
- Leaders, including governors, are resolute in their determination to ensure that the improvements seen in reading and writing are mirrored in mathematics. Teachers have benefited from additional training, and leaders have very recently introduced a daily 'mini maths' session. This allows pupils to review their learning and practise their calculations. Pupils' books indicate that they are developing their mathematical fluency well and that teachers usually identify pupils' misconceptions quickly and help them to correct these. However, new initiatives are not sufficiently focused on reasoning and problem solving. As a result, the extent to which pupils complete problem-solving and reasoning tasks remains too variable.
- All of the parents and carers that I spoke with during the inspection, and almost all of those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, were very positive about the school. One parent commented:

'My child is extremely happy at Saltergate. The staff go above and beyond to ensure the children have exciting learning experiences. They offer a good range of after-school clubs and parents are invited in to see their children's learning regularly. We could not be happier with Saltergate, the staff, leadership and the ethos.'

Another parent captured the view of the vast majority who responded, saying 'Saltergate is a great school. All the staff are hardworking and dedicated. Our child is very happy at school.'

- Pupils and children speak very positively about the school. They enjoy the numerous extra activities and visits available to them. During the inspection, the pupils were keen to talk to me about their recent visit to the railway museum in York. Behaviour is very good at all times. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards learning. They are confident and keen to be involved with, and talk about, their learning. Pupils excitedly and enthusiastically respond to questions, showing their 'thinking thumbs', an indication that they wish to share an answer. They listen respectfully to answers that their classmates give and offer support to each other when they find things difficult.
- Your lunchtime arrangements are impressive. Pupils sit down at mixed-aged tables and dine together. Older pupils take on various roles, ensuring that everyone is served and has enough to eat. Pupils talk together about their lessons and what they have been learning and do not leave the table until

everyone has finished, and all of the dishes have been cleared away. It was a pleasure to dine with the children. After lunch, pupils go out onto the playground to play, where there are numerous purposeful learning activities and challenges which capture the pupils' interest and imagination.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year increases
- pupils, particularly the most able, can explain their reasoning in mathematics, such as how and why they have tackled problems and that pupils are given opportunities to explore the different ways to arrive at the correct answer, using a variety of mathematical operations
- they embed and refine new initiatives to ensure that pupils are able to deepen their mathematical thinking and explain their work precisely, using the correct mathematical vocabulary and terminology.

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

Yours sincerely

Daniel Murray
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, and a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with your early years leader, your coordinator for special educational needs and your leaders of English and mathematics. Together, you and I visited classrooms to observe teaching and to look at children's and pupils' work. I also looked in depth at pupils' mathematics books and other work. I met with a group of pupils from Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. I listened to six pupils read. I also listened informally to pupils read during my visits to lessons. I took into account the 31 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, including 17 free-text comments, and the 14 questionnaire responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I also evaluated recent information in relation to pupils' progress throughout the school, the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan and a sample of monitoring records about the quality of teaching. I met with you as designated safeguarding leader and reviewed documentation and records about how you keep your pupils safe.