

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



17 May 2019

Mrs Andreya Cowan
Headteacher
High Down Junior School
Down Road
Portishead
Bristol
Somerset
BS20 6DY

Dear Mrs Cowan

Short inspection of High Down Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 8 May 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in December 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since joining the Lighthouse Schools Partnership in 2016, the school has worked effectively with leaders in the trust as well as external consultants. This has enabled school leaders to evaluate provision, set targets for improvement and help teachers understand how to improve outcomes.

You are a well-respected leader. The support of your deputy headteacher is highly effective. Along with other leaders, you support the professional development of teachers and subject leaders. As a result, teachers provide pupils with timely and appropriate academic and pastoral support. This is improving pupils' outcomes. Staff are motivated because they believe that leaders support them well. Staff feel respected and appreciate leaders' consideration of their wellbeing, such as providing mindfulness sessions.

The school's broad, rich curriculum reflects the school's vision of 'Believing, achieving, learning for life'. For example, in addition to reading, writing and mathematics, pupils are provided with valuable opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in environmental science, sport and music. Parents appreciate what the school provides for their children. They typically comment, 'The school is about so much more than academic achievement' and 'The curriculum is fun, active and creative.'

Following some disappointing results at the end of key stage 2 in 2017, particularly in mathematics, leaders in the trust took immediate action to analyse the cause of the decline. This enabled them to provide precisely targeted support to improve teaching. As a result, outcomes improved last year, notably in mathematics. Current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make good progress in all subjects. Many disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are able to undertake work appropriate for their age. However, several pupils are still catching up from low starting points.

You provide middle leaders with relevant training, and time out of class, in order to evaluate teaching. They undertake a wide range of monitoring activities, which enables them to identify what aspects of teaching need to improve. However, some leaders are new to their roles and are yet to consolidate their skills. It is too soon to determine if they can sustain recent improvements to teaching and ensure that pupils routinely achieve their full potential.

The trust holds governors to account to evaluate the impact of the school's work. As a result, governors ask searching questions and make focused visits, linked to the school's priorities, to assure themselves of the school's effectiveness. They report their findings to the trust.

Adults form mutually respectful working relationships with pupils. Pupils know what is expected of them and, consequently, they listen carefully and follow instructions sensibly. This helps them to develop positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are polite and welcoming. They enjoy school and say that teachers listen to them.

Pupils feel safe at school. They say that behaviour is usually good and, when it is not, adults quickly sort out any issues. You work closely with pupils who need help to manage their behaviour. For example, pupils have safe spaces to go when they are angry or upset. You have engaged specialist support to introduce 'Pride in Play', which enables pupils to develop positive social interactions and resolve conflicts. This is reducing the incidents of unwanted behaviour.

The majority of parents are happy with the school and comment that leaders and teachers are approachable. Typical comments include, 'I think the school is fantastic, as are the teachers' and 'The school listens to concerns and tailors the support it provides for children.' However, a small proportion of parents are dissatisfied with leaders' response to their concerns and management of behaviour.

Safeguarding is effective.

You provide timely updates to safeguarding training for all staff, including governors. This helps them to identify when a pupil might be at risk. Governors undertake safeguarding audits to check that safeguarding procedures are rigorous. Adults know that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility and can explain how to refer concerns.

You maintain detailed and chronological safeguarding records and elicit advice and support from external agencies when necessary. You routinely check that your actions are having a positive impact. You undertake all essential checks to ensure that adults working in the school are safe to work with children. You meticulously record these details on the school's single central record. There are clear and well-understood procedures in the event of an emergency.

Pupils enjoy school and the majority of pupils attend regularly. However, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND have higher absence than others. For some pupils this is unavoidable. Leaders are working hard to improve this.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that my first line of enquiry would be to find out what led to considerable improvements in outcomes for pupils in Year 6 in 2018, particularly in mathematics. I also wanted to check if these improvements are being sustained for current pupils.
- Leaders from the Lighthouse Schools Partnership undertake thorough reviews and evaluations of teaching. They help school leaders to create precisely focused plans and provide ongoing support to enable school leaders to ensure that they sustain improvements to teaching.
- You and your deputy headteacher use your accurate evaluations of pupils' outcomes to provide well-focused and highly effective training for teachers. This is improving the consistency of teaching. For example, teachers accurately assess pupils' learning to plan appropriate work to match pupils' age and ability. Teachers model learning carefully and provide clear expectations of what they want pupils to achieve.
- Pupils are improving their fluency in mathematics and can apply what they have learned to reason and solve problems. For example, when observing a pictogram showing 16 books, a Year 3 pupil commented, 'I know that there must be a total of 32 books because it says that each symbol represents two books.'
- Pupils enjoy developing their skills in writing. For example, pupils in Year 6 were interested to learn about Ernest Shackleton's voyage, which motivated them to write from the perspective of a crew member. Pupils' work over time confirms that pupils are improving the accuracy of their spelling and punctuation. They can edit and redraft their work to improve the content and presentation. Pupils have improved their stamina for writing. They are able to write at length, with increasing complexity. Pupils enjoy opportunities to publish and celebrate their writing. Several beautifully presented examples were seen during the inspection.
- Reviews of pupils' learning and the school's most recent assessment information confirm that pupils are making good progress in all subjects. A large majority of pupils are able to undertake work appropriate to their age. Several pupils are achieving particularly well and working at greater depth in their learning.
- Leaders, including governors, routinely monitor teaching to check its impact on pupils' outcomes. This helps them to intervene when teaching needs to further improve. However, some leaders are new to their roles. It will take time to

embed their skills and ensure that all pupils, particularly those who need to catch up, consistently achieve what they are capable of.

- My second line of enquiry was to determine the effectiveness of additional teaching, particularly in writing and mathematics, for pupils who need to catch up. I particularly wanted to focus on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. This is because, over time, progress for these pupils is not consistently strong and outcomes are below that of pupils nationally.
- The deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinators work closely with teachers, pupils and parents to support the needs of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Precisely focused additional teaching is helping to fill gaps in pupils' knowledge and consolidate their skills in all subjects. Effective pastoral support is fostering positive attitudes to learning. The vast majority of parents welcome the support the school provides for their children. They typically comment, 'The school excels at pastoral care' and 'Extra support for my children's needs is improving their confidence.'
- Pupils who need to catch up are making good progress from low starting points. Several pupils are able to undertake the same work as other pupils in their class. However, approximately half of disadvantaged pupils and the majority of pupils with SEND are working below where they should be for their age. Some pupils are unable to benefit from the education the school offers because they do not attend regularly. In some cases this is for justifiable reasons.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- further support and training for middle leaders help them to ensure that recent improvements to teaching are sustained and pupils routinely achieve their full potential
- precisely focused teaching and pastoral support continue to improve the attendance and achievement of pupils who need to catch up, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.

I am copying this letter to the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Beeks
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I had regular meetings with you and your deputy headteacher. The director of education for the Lighthouse Schools Partnership, who is supporting school improvement, attended several of these meetings. I met with the two special educational needs coordinators and had a meeting with the subject leaders for mathematics and writing. I held a meeting with a group of governors and a separate meeting with the chief executive officer of the trust and the chair of the trust board. I checked the school's single central record and safeguarding records and we discussed your safeguarding procedures. We reviewed the school's latest assessment information and discussed the school's self-evaluation and development priorities. The deputy headteacher and I jointly observed writing lessons in Years 4 and 6 and mathematics lessons in Years 3 and 5. During our learning walks, the deputy headteacher and I reviewed pupils' learning over time in their mathematics and writing books. I spoke with pupils in lessons and at break-time. I also spoke with several parents at the beginning of the school day. I considered 91 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, along with 48 additional free-text comments. I took account of 38 responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and 84 responses to the online pupil survey.