

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Phillippa Whitton
The Green Infant School
New Street
South Normanton
Alfreton
Derbyshire
DE55 2BS

Dear Mrs Whitton

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of The Green Infant School

Following my visit with Ged Philbin, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 1 May 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in February 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, inspectors held meetings with you and members of the senior leadership team, three members of the governing body, including the chair, and two representatives from the local authority (LA). Inspectors had conversations with pupils, staff, parents and carers. I met with a national leader for education (NLE) who is supporting the school with improvements on behalf of the LA. I also met with the chief executive officer of the Flying High Trust (FHT). A range of documents provided by school leaders was reviewed as well as documents on the school website. I reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures, including a scrutiny of the school's single central record. The LA's statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

You were appointed full-time headteacher in April 2018. A new senior teacher was appointed in September 2018. There has been considerable staff absence and temporary appointments of some long-term supply teachers. A new chair of the governing body was elected in October 2018. The school is scheduled to close and reopen as part of the FHT at the beginning of September 2019.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since the last inspection, leadership and management of the school has stabilised. You have sensibly used the expertise of the NLE to support you in making swift improvements. The appointment of a senior teacher has further strengthened the senior leadership team. Senior leaders have worked cohesively to make a clear impact on many of the areas that were identified for improvement.

The enthusiasm and determination of senior leaders and governors to improve the school rapidly are evident. Drawing on expertise within the LA and from the NLE, leaders have established the systems and procedures necessary to address the issues raised in the inspection report. For example, leaders have reviewed the policy and expectations for pupils' behaviour. The headteacher has led the change in ethos through consultations with pupils, parents and staff. There is now greater clarity in the expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour has improved and that teachers now deal with any incidents of poor behaviour quickly and fairly. Parents report that any concerns about pupils' behaviour are now followed up thoroughly and usually resolved satisfactorily.

Leaders have restructured and improved the provision in the early years to meet better the needs of all children. Planning of provision has been redesigned to ensure that children are becoming curious and independent learners and can access a variety of learning experiences. Adults keep a careful check on children's achievements and adjust provision appropriately to suit children's interests and extend their learning. There are abundant opportunities for children to develop their early writing skills. For example, children were observed playing excitedly in the shop role-play area. They independently chose items to purchase and used their developing writing and phonics skills to write shopping lists. Plans are in place to develop further the outdoor provision to provide a wider variety of experiences for children to learn in different areas of the curriculum.

The work to develop and implement an accurate and effective assessment system has been successful. Teachers are becoming more confident in using the school's assessment system to record their ongoing and summative evaluations of pupils' progress and attainment. Leaders regularly check the accuracy of these assessments with colleagues within the school as well as with colleagues working in other schools. Senior leaders have also instigated regular meetings with teachers to discuss individual pupils' progress and plan their next steps to improve pupils'

outcomes in different subjects. However, inspectors' joint scrutiny of pupils' work with senior leaders showed that although the accuracy of assessments has improved, teachers do not consistently use the information they collect from these assessments to plan work for pupils that appropriately matches their ability. Some pupils are set work that is too hard for them and some teachers' expectations for what pupils can achieve are not yet high enough.

Leaders have reviewed the teaching of phonics across the school. This has resulted in training for all staff to improve the structure of lessons and ensure consistency of approach and the use of pure sounds by staff and pupils. Pupils' development in phonics is now more closely monitored and evaluated to ensure that they make good progress. The school's current assessment information suggests that these improvements are also having a positive impact on pupils' progress in reading. Leaders have rightly identified that the impact on pupils' spelling has not been as positive and recognise this as an area for continued development.

The appointment of a senior teacher to oversee the school's use of the pupil premium has had a positive impact on how funding is evaluated and allocated. The leader works closely with the coordinator for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to ensure that funding is used appropriately to meet pupils' needs. For example, professional development for learning support assistants (LSAs), has increased the school's capacity to offer a range of social, emotional and mental health support for pupils. Some adults have been trained in specific activities designed to support pupils with their learning in reading, writing and mathematics. This is helping to address gaps in pupils' learning, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's internal assessment information shows that the additional focused work and activities are having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. However, there is further work to be done to ensure that particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils make accelerated progress in their learning.

LSAs have benefited from bespoke training to help them to support pupils in their learning in the classroom more effectively. LSAs who have responded well to this training help pupils to develop their independence and encourage them to be resilient learners. However, this is not yet consistently the case with all LSAs who support learning in lessons.

Teachers' expectations for the presentation of pupils' work have been raised. Pupils are aware of these expectations and the quality of their presentation is improving across different subjects.

Senior leaders have instigated comprehensive strategies for checking the quality of teaching. Teachers have appropriately focused appraisal targets to hold them to account for the performance of pupils. Senior leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching and the impact of new strategies and approaches to lesson planning. They have accessed good-quality professional development for teachers to develop

their practice and introduced new approaches to the teaching of areas of the curriculum, such as handwriting, phonics, reading and mathematics.

Leaders place high importance on the quality of teachers' planning and have raised expectations for the structure and content of writing in lessons. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that the quantity and quality of pupils' writing in some classes are improving as a result. However, there are too many inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils in particular can achieve in their writing. Teachers do not ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged in their writing and have sufficient opportunities to develop and extend their writing skills.

Persistent absence of some teachers has made it difficult for leaders to consistently implement improved teaching strategies. Where the approaches have been consistently implemented and sustained, there have been rapid and effective improvements to teaching. However, developments have been difficult to maintain where teaching has not been consistent. For example, teachers' expectations of pupils' handwriting have begun to decline following a substantial improvement after the last inspection. Where teaching continues to be weak, pupils become uninterested in their learning and lose concentration.

Work to develop the skills and knowledge of subject leaders has begun. Some leaders are accessing middle leadership courses to improve their skills. However, the absence of staff who are also subject leaders has meant that some subject leaders have not been able to access training to improve the leadership of their areas of responsibility. In their absence, senior leaders have taken on key subject leader roles and responsibilities, such as for English and mathematics. Plans are in place to develop sustainable improvements in subject leadership from September, when the school becomes part of the FHT.

The governing body is highly supportive of the headteacher and the senior leadership team. The new chair of governors is an experienced governor and has worked actively with senior leaders and specialists from the LA to guide the school through the process of developing improvements. Governors work well with the school community to ensure that parents and staff are informed about the process of joining the FHT. Parents, pupils and staff who spoke with inspectors were positive about the improvements and the future of the school.

The support provided by the NLE and by advisers from the LA is supportive and challenging. They know the school well and have provided you with support in focusing carefully on the areas that need the most improvement. The NLE is particularly effective in helping you to develop and strengthen the leadership capacity of the school. The CEO of the FHT is working closely with the LA and school leaders to ensure that there is an appropriate plan of action in place to continue to drive sustainable improvements when the school joins the trust.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Innes-Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector