

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



17 June 2019

Mrs Claire Golding
Blagdon Primary School
Bath Road
Blagdon
Bristol
BS40 7RW

Dear Mrs Golding

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Blagdon Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 June 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 October 2018. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher/mathematics subject leader and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), as well as the early years leader. The inspector also met with representatives of the governing body. The director for education from the Lighthouse Schools' Partnership (LSP) worked closely with the headteacher and lead inspector throughout the inspection. This provided evidence and information about the effectiveness of external support, including that commissioned by the local authority. The inspector also spoke with pupils and other staff throughout the day. There were joint visits to classrooms to evaluate the quality of education, coupled with workbook reviews. A small sample of children in the Reception Year were observed working with the class teacher to evaluate the accuracy of teacher assessment in the early years.

The local authority's statement of action and the school's development action plan (SDP) were evaluated.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been few changes to the school's staffing or leadership arrangements. The most significant is that a teacher has joined the school in the spring term and has taken over the role of SENCo. Leaders are receiving ongoing external support, predominantly through the LSP. Leaders and governors are also engaging with a local teaching school to use the expertise this has to offer. This includes the use of specialist leaders in education to improve aspects identified through the SDP.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Leaders and governors have taken full account and have swiftly responded to the findings from the previous inspection. Leaders' decisions and actions to improve safeguarding arrangements have been particularly effective. As a result, the quality of care and education for pupils is improving well.

Senior leaders and governors are implementing the SDP well. Relevant activities, including staff training and professional development, are ensuring that the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection are being addressed robustly. Leaders check the school's progress and are held to account through precisely matched and cross-referenced monitoring activities. This is enabling leaders to have a focused and strategic approach to school improvement. In addition, governors check the progress of the school through first-hand visits. These have proved useful to help them understand and evaluate provision 'on the ground'. Governors understand their roles and responsibilities and there is a healthy balance of challenge and support.

Safeguarding arrangements are now effective. Promoting the strongest possible culture for safeguarding pupils is a prominent and ongoing feature of the school's work. Consequently, pupils are kept safe and there is a renewed emphasis on safeguarding being everyone's responsibility. Since the previous inspection, all staff and governors have had full 'refresher' safeguarding and child protection training. A new secure online system has been introduced for monitoring, recording and escalating any concerns relating to pupils' welfare. The roles of the safeguarding leaders have been clarified, including procedures for covering the designated safeguarding lead when she is not at school. Staff know how to respond to times or situations when pupils may be at risk. Leaders take timely action to refer information to the relevant external agencies to protect pupils. Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe and well cared for. They spoke confidently about e-safety, how to evacuate the school safely and bullying. During the inspection, there were a few minor administrative errors in record-keeping, including the school's single central record and safeguarding policy that needed updating. These were quickly rectified during the inspection and did not present any risk to pupils. In light of the previous inspection findings, the medical needs policy was checked. Governors have revised this and it is now fit for purpose.

Leaders have ensured that the school has maintained a positive ethos with high staff morale. The headteacher has worked effectively with other leaders and the director of education from the LSP to ensure that there has been a robust and strategic approach to school improvement. The expertise and advice of the director of education have been instrumental in providing high-quality guidance to school leaders and governors. This is ensuring that the right actions are being taken to continue addressing the remaining weaknesses in the school.

Leaders ensure that pupils' progress is now tracked on a termly basis. As such, they have identified pupils who are at risk of underachieving in reading, writing and mathematics, including the most able pupils. As a result, teachers are focusing on pupils who need to catch up. However, there is still sometimes a mismatch between planned work and pupils' ability, particularly for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Targets and provision are not sufficiently precise in identifying pupils' barriers and what they most need to learn next. For some pupils, targets and work are overly ambitious and too difficult for them to achieve.

Some middle leaders are new to post, including the SENCo and the early years leader. These leaders are dedicated and committed to getting the best for the pupils of the school. They engage positively with the support provided by the school to improve their areas of responsibility. However, there is still more to do in these areas to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good. For example, SEND provision is not focused well enough on pupils' individual needs or the barriers which slow pupils' progress. Furthermore, the SDP does not address some fundamental weaknesses in the assessment of early years well enough. As a result, assessments in the early years are not yet reliable or securely aligned to national statements and benchmarks.

Teachers use assessment information to inform their planning. Revised systems, which include 'data meetings' to check pupils' progress, are being incorporated into teachers' planning. Lessons are enjoyable and pupils take an active role in their learning. In particular, teachers expect pupils to edit and improve their own work. Pupils often respond positively to the advice and guidance provided by teachers. There are positive working relationships in lessons, which are contributing to improving outcomes. However, expectations of the most able pupils are too variable, particularly in writing towards the highest standards across the full range of subjects. In addition, there are times when pupils' punctuation is errant, which reduces the effect of the writing and its impact on the reading audience. Overall, however, pupils' writing is improving well. There is strong evidence of pupils writing for different reasons and purposes, including detailed recounts, diaries and information texts about other civilisations. For example, in Years 5 and 6, pupils have written complex pieces about the different beliefs and cultures of the Ancient Egyptians and Mayans.

The early years leader is securing key improvements in the provision for children in the Reception Year. There is a clearly discernible focus on the uniqueness of an

early years setting and providing engaging experiences when children start school. This is reflected in the way that the class and outdoor space are now set up and managed. As a result, children enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum. They are supported and encouraged to think for themselves and work keenly together within a positive climate for learning. This is seen in their attitudes to learning and reflected in some of their outcomes, such as creative writing. During the inspection, children demonstrated a strong phonics understanding and applied this in their reading and writing. However, some assessments in reading, writing and mathematics are overly generous and require re-evaluation.

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 development plan is fit for purpose. However, there is currently insufficient information about the next steps for improving the early years.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose. The unmet criteria from November 2018 have been fully resolved through leaders' and governors' work with the Department for Education and the LSP.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the LSP, 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

Stewart Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector