

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



19 January 2019

Mrs Helen Spearing
Headteacher
St Leonard's Primary School
St Leonard's Avenue
Stafford
Staffordshire
ST17 4LT

Dear Mrs Spearing

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Leonard's Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 December 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because at its previous section 5 inspections, the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- continue to develop the curriculum offer, to ensure that all pupils can demonstrate not only the academic progress they make, but also the progress they make in their personal development and well-being
- support new governors to develop in their roles to further strengthen leadership.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the acting deputy headteacher, subject and phase leaders, and representatives of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan. You and I jointly carried out lesson observations. I looked at

work in pupils' books, assessment information, governing body documents, action plans and monitoring records. I spoke to parents at the start of the day and viewed responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent questionnaire.

Context

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes to staffing and leadership. The previous substantive deputy headteacher left the school and an existing member of staff is currently acting deputy headteacher. Two teachers have left the school and two classes have temporary teachers.

The chair of governors stepped down at the end of the last academic year and a new chair of governors took up the post earlier this term. Two new governors have joined the governing body.

Main findings

Leaders have addressed the areas for improvement from the last inspection effectively. This is evidenced clearly in the improved pupil outcomes at the end of the last academic year. At the end of key stage 2 in 2018, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national averages. This is a much stronger picture than the previous year and consolidates the improvements made since the last inspection.

At the end of key stage 1 in 2018, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics were in line with or above the national averages in all three subjects. The proportions attaining at greater depth were also well above the national averages in all three subjects. In 2018, the proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check was also well above the national average.

Together with senior leaders and the governing body, you have ensured that there is now a much sharper focus on improving outcomes across the school. All staff are accountable for the progress that pupils make in their classes. Teachers, with the support of leaders, prepare detailed action plans for classes to address any gaps in pupils' learning.

You have revised systems and procedures, so that they work for your pupils in your school. For example, teachers use their professional judgement combined with test results and other information to gain a more rounded picture of each pupil's progress. Discussions about pupils' progress are now more focused and productive.

The governing body has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school. Governors now focus more sharply on holding leaders to account for impact against the school's development plan. They are pleased with

improvements so far, but they are not complacent and are ambitious for all pupils to make the best possible progress.

Many governors have valuable skills and experience in education. In the light of recent changes to the governing body, governors carried out an audit of their skills and put in place a governors' development plan. New governors and those who have changed their areas of responsibility are not yet fully established in their roles.

Teaching is now more consistently effective. Teachers have benefited from a wide range of training and support to improve their practice. They have well-developed subject knowledge across the curriculum. Pupils study many, varied topics in depth. They now have more opportunities to apply their skills in subjects other than mathematics and English. For example, in studying the Victorians, pupils apply their mathematical skills by designing the layout of a Victorian village using coordinates or converting money from old to new currency.

Teachers use assessment information more strategically to plan tasks that are better matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils choose from increasingly difficult learning challenges which encourage them, particularly the most able, to stretch themselves. Teachers establish at the beginning of a project what pupils already know and can do. They take this into account when designing learning tasks. Where necessary, teachers teach key vocabulary in advance to ensure that all pupils start with a similar understanding of the topic. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are now making progress that is in line with, and in some cases better than, that of their peers

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and well-developed learning behaviours. They can explain why the learning objectives are differentiated and how this helps them. The new feedback policy helps pupils to understand how to improve their work. They are given time to respond to teachers' feedback, which helps them to digest and absorb the advice they are given. In this way, they embed their knowledge and skills and build resilience as learners. These well-established routines support pupils' learning effectively.

Pupils' work shows that they now have more opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English. The standard of their writing has improved greatly and teachers now have consistent expectations of pupils' handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils receive presentation awards in assembly, which demonstrates leaders' commitment to getting this right. This is particularly helpful for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

Leaders have introduced new initiatives to provide support for pupils' social and emotional health. Alongside this, teachers are reviewing the tasks they set to ensure that pupils can demonstrate their progress, personally and academically, in a variety of ways. More time is needed for these developments to become fully embedded.

Middle leaders are now more accountable for outcomes in their areas of responsibility. They have benefited from effective support from senior leaders. They regularly monitor teaching and learning, looking at pupils' work and supporting teachers to improve their practice. Leaders are clear about their expectations, making links between the priorities in the school development plan and teachers' performance management objectives. As a result, teaching has improved and underperformance has been addressed effectively.

All staff and governors have contributed to the school development plan. Staff say that there is a vibrant culture of professional dialogue in school, where good practice is shared and feedback to teachers is open and transparent. In this way, all teachers can learn from the good practice that exists in school.

Leaders are proud of the progress made since the last inspection. They are particularly pleased with the way pupils have responded positively to the increased level of challenge, taking more responsibility for their own learning.

External support

In the period following the last inspection, the local authority commissioned regular support for the school. However, as standards have improved and the school has demonstrated capacity for further improvement, the amount of support has reduced. Leaders now seek out the most appropriate support from a variety of sources to address the school's current priorities. Leaders have established close, collaborative partnerships with other local schools to share training and agree teachers' judgements.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Spilsbury
Her Majesty's Inspector