

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



9 November 2017

Mrs Lorraine Cannon
Headteacher
Moulsham Infant School
Princes Road
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 9DG

Dear Mrs Cannon

Short inspection of Moulsham Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 2017, 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. There have been considerable changes to the school and its staffing complement during the last four years. The school's roll has increased to accommodate a fourth class in each year group. You have therefore had to increase the number of staff required while also overseeing a considerable building project. Only 50% of your current staff were at the school at the time of the previous inspection, a number of whom you have supported since they arrived as newly qualified teachers. In fact, 20 new members of staff joined the school in September 2017. A number of staff are therefore new to their roles of responsibility. However, you have ensured that pupils' and children's outcomes remain the key priority and this is borne out by their results over time. You have rightly prioritised revisiting the school's vision to 'Be the Best We Can Be' following such a large intake of new members of staff.

Children and pupils at Moulsham Infant School are delightful. You have created a safe, stimulating environment in which every pupil is keen to learn and play. Children get off to a flying start in the early years, and quickly settle. As one parent said of the school, 'I was worried that in such a large school my children would be somewhat lost among the many. This concern was unfounded as you have created a small-school feel with lots of opportunities for the children to shine.' Children and pupils clearly enjoy their learning and regard it as fun and exciting. Parent after parent who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) by text said that their children were not only happy at school but enjoyed telling them about

their learning. As one parent said, 'It is amazing to hear my children's stories everyday about what they have learned or the exciting activities they have done.'

The previous inspection report asked the school to continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure that learning support assistants effectively support pupils' learning during lessons. You and your team have made your high expectations very clear. Teachers plan together to ensure that there is consistency across classes within year groups, and effectively share their planning with learning support assistants. Performance management systems are firmly in place to ensure that everyone is held to account for the outcomes of the children or pupils in their care. Over time, children's outcomes have largely been above the national average in the early years, in the phonics check in Year 1, and at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. The majority of children and pupils currently in the school make good progress in reading and writing, except for some lower-attaining pupils and some boys. A number of pupils, particularly in Year 2, lag behind in their progress in mathematics.

The second area for improvement from the previous inspection was to make fuller and more effective use of the data and the school's own assessment information so that all groups of pupils continue to make good progress. You have made considerable inroads into this area. Leaders ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate by moderating with other schools and across your own school. The most recent development has been to check the accuracy of teachers' on-entry assessments of children as they join the Reception classes. You are rightly pleased that this external verification of teachers' assessments concludes that they are accurate. Given the changes of teaching staff and the proportion of teachers new to the profession, this is testament to your in-school training, support and mentoring. You and your senior leaders confidently use the information you regularly gather about children's and pupils' progress. This provides governors with a very incisive view of the quality of teaching and how well children and pupils are doing. As a result, the school improvement plan and self-evaluation documents give an accurate picture of what the school does well and what could be improved further.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. You ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their children are safe and well cared for at school. This is also reflected in the staff survey. You have created a culture of care and vigilance and are passionate about ensuring that pupils feel safe, both physically and emotionally. You are tenacious in following up with external agencies any concerns you have about children or pupils. Record-keeping is of good quality and charts well any concerns from staff, actions taken and ongoing monitoring.

As a result of your and your senior leaders' regular checking, you have highlighted emerging priorities and allocated resources to meet children's and pupils' needs. For example, the appointment of a family support worker and a counsellor has had a considerable impact on some children's and pupils' attendance and their mental

health. Consequently, and particularly for some disadvantaged pupils, children's and pupils' progress is good and their readiness to learn vastly improved. The further impact has been on families. As one parent said, 'When you have concerns, these are listened to and crucially responded to.'

Despite leaders and governors making clear the school's position on taking holidays in school time, there remains a stubborn core of families who do not adhere to the school's policy. Equally, some parents do not ensure that their children arrive at school on time. Together, you and I saw examples of where absence and regular lateness have definitely played a part in some pupils' slower progress. You and your governors remain wholeheartedly committed to ensuring that pupils attend school regularly and on time.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we agreed that I would explore how well teaching and learning ensure that all pupils make good progress from their varying starting points. This was because this was an area of improvement in your previous inspection report, and some lower-attaining pupils did not make the progress expected of them in reading and writing in the academic years 2016 and 2017.
- Leaders monitor teaching and learning effectively. Despite there being many teachers new to the profession or new to the school, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Leaders have put in place training to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the expectations of behaviour, attitudes to learning and planning. The impact of this is that there is more consistency in year groups than previously.
- In school, evidence shows that the skills of children entering the school in the Reception year are becoming weaker. A significant proportion of children enter the school with skills and abilities that are lower than those typical of children of this age. Careful initial tracking of these children and as they move into key stage 1 shows that some are showing signs of significant needs, particularly in reading and writing. You and your early years staff are proactive and creative in addressing this issue. You have already begun working with pre-schools and nurseries to support the provision and teaching of this important area; however, it is too early to see the direct impact of this innovative work. However, staff remain committed to working with feeder provisions and families to ensure that children get the best start to their education.
- The proportion of children entering the Reception year who were working at or above expectations in 2015 was 60% in reading and 54% in writing. This declined considerably in 2016 when the on-entry assessments showed that this was 21% in reading and 38% in writing. At the end of 2016, in key stage 1, the proportion of lower-attaining pupils who achieved the expected progress in reading and writing was well below the national average. At the end of 2017, it would appear that there has been a positive shift in the proportion of lower-attaining pupils making expected progress, particularly in reading but also in writing. Provisional results show that there is still a number of this group of pupils, particularly boys, who do not make the expected progress.

- The second area that we agreed to look at was how well leaders and governors use additional funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make the best progress they can. This is because, over time, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who attain the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 has fluctuated. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has also been below the national average. Likewise, the proportion of disadvantaged children in the early years who achieved a good level of development has also been below the national average.
- In 2016, the proportion of children who are eligible for free school meals and achieved a good level of development was only 50%, while nationally this figure was 72%. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in Year 1 who achieved the expected standard was also 50%, while the national average was 82%. While the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016 was above the national average, none of these pupils achieved greater depth in their learning. Early indications of this group's results in July 2017 show that the proportion who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is below last year's national average.
- Together with you and your leadership team, we looked at the work in pupils' books and the school's own assessment information, and observed pupils' learning in lessons. Their progress in reading and mathematics is good from their varying starting points. Sometimes, progress in writing is more difficult to evidence as so much work has been done to extend pupils' spoken language.
- The focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening is paying dividends. Pupils are not reluctant to write and are showing evidence of some good use of language in their early writing. This is in no small part due to the exciting ways that teachers encourage pupils to write. In one lesson we observed, pupils were animatedly acting out the Gunpowder Plot scenario. Not only was the debate about who should play who interesting to hear, but the clarity with which pupils spoke in their 'roles' was impressive. Confidently acting out the scene, pupils improvised this historic event with accuracy. They were then very able to write each character's reaction to the unfolding drama in the speech bubbles provided for them. One member of the 'Guy Fawkes team' wrote, 'Oh 36 barrels! How are we ever going to get this to the cell without being seen?'
- The next area that we agreed we would look at was how well leaders and governors use data and assessment information to ensure that all groups make good progress. This is because this was an area for improvement from the previous inspection and it was apparent that some pupils did not consistently make good progress.
- Leaders have put in place much to ensure that everyone is aware of the school's priorities, how these have arisen and what is being done to make a difference to children's and pupils' outcomes. The assessment leader provides high quality information on achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Classes within year groups and vulnerable groups within each class are carefully tracked. This information is effectively shared at regular pupil progress meetings where teachers are held accountable for pupils' progress.

- Where priorities arise, interventions are put in place to accelerate pupils' progress. For example, the school prioritised improvement in reading for all year groups last year. The impact of this can clearly be seen from the information at the end of key stage 1 and indeed within each class. The school's self-evaluation document evidences emerging priorities and provides an accurate view of the school's strengths. Leaders and governors use this information to identify the school's areas of development. You have recently ensured that this information is also used more widely. All middle leaders now identify an area for further development, and track the impact of decisions they make on pupils' outcomes.
- Following rigorous analysis, the English subject leader put in place actions to address the school's dip in the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the phonics check in 2016. Personalised homework, games for parents to play with their children at home, and additional support for the growing number of pupils whose first language is not English all had a considerable impact on pupils' achievement. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the phonics check in 2017 was 95% compared with 78% in 2016.
- The final area we looked at was how well leaders and governors are supporting families whose children do not attend school as regularly as they should. While pupils' attendance overall has been in line or above the national average for some time, attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been below average.
- Leaders track pupils' attendance with as much rigour as they do their achievement. As a result, actions have been taken to try to secure the best possible attendance of these two vulnerable groups of pupils. For example, the school pays for some pupils to attend the privately-run breakfast club; and the family support worker liaises with families to minimise the problems they face in getting pupils to attend school regularly. Additionally, you put frequent reminders in the school's newsletter about the impact that low attendance can have on pupils' achievement. As a result, there have been significant improvements in many pupils' attendance.
- Leaders and governors made a decision, along with two other local schools, to not grant any holidays in school time. The vast majority of parents adhere to the school's policy. However, there remain a few parents who do not. The same is the case for the few families whose children do not arrive at school at the time they should. As a result, some of these pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in mathematics increases so that it is more in line with the good progress pupils make in reading and writing
- lower-attaining pupils, particularly boys, are effectively supported so that they make the best academic progress they can in reading and writing

- attendance of the school's most vulnerable pupils increases so that it is more in line with other pupils nationally, and all pupils regularly arrive at school on time.

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

Yours sincerely

Ruth Brock
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your senior leadership team, governors and your office staff to discuss safeguarding and aspects of school leadership and management. Together with you or your deputy headteacher, I observed learning in the majority of classes, talked with children and pupils about their learning, and heard pupils read. Your senior leaders, you and I scrutinised English and mathematics work from a random selection of disadvantaged and lower-attaining pupils and children from across the school. I spoke with you and your deputy headteacher about safeguarding arrangements. We viewed information about child protection, records of referrals to social care and actions that followed. I also scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. I took account of the 41 responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 31 of which were by text.