

25 February 2018

Mrs Clare Harding
Headteacher
Asquith Primary School
Asquith Street
Mansfield
Nottinghamshire
NG18 3DG

Dear Mrs Harding

Short inspection of Asquith Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2018, 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 last inspection. You have an accurate and realistic view of the school's strengths and areas that need further development. You have developed a strong team of staff, who provide learning activities that pupils find interesting and enjoyable. The leadership team and subject leaders have identified accurate priorities for improvement. The school promotes key values of respect, responsibility, determination, understanding, cooperation and honesty.

The school has improved steadily since the previous inspection. Pupils study a broad range of subjects and have good opportunities to take part in clubs, sports activities and trips. The culture of the school helps pupils to feel happy and secure. I spoke with several during my visit and they all liked the school's friendly and welcoming atmosphere. One made a typical comment by saying, 'I love this school.' Relationships in lessons and around the school are very positive and supportive. Pupils get on well with each other and older pupils often support and help the younger ones. They find learning interesting and engaging.

Over time, pupils have made increasingly good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because teaching has improved. In 2017, Year 6 pupils made average progress from their starting points. The proportion of Year 2 pupils who achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check was average, reflecting the attention that the school has given to this aspect of learning. A greater proportion of children are reaching a good level of development by the time they leave the Reception Year and many make good progress from their starting points, which are

often well below those typical for their age. The proportion reaching a good level of development is, however, still below average. Some disadvantaged pupils have not caught up with their peers during this stage in their learning.

Improving pupils' writing has been a key priority across all year groups. The pupils are using their increased skills initially to talk about ideas, using symbols to represent words, and then writing with confidence, using 'cold' and 'hot' tasks. They take pride in their work. Pupils have an increasingly good understanding of grammar; they practise spellings regularly and are improving their reading skills. For example, older pupils are able to describe terms such as fronted adverbials or similes with confidence. They understand and describe how they might use these features of language to make writing more effective.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of lesson topics that they cover and this has helped many to become very positive about their learning. Pupils are also secure and confident in their use of different calculations because teaching this has been a priority. You have identified the need for them to apply their mathematical skills in more challenging contexts. You are aware that staff need to expect more pupils to achieve work that is of greater depth. Although the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are improving, expectations for this group are not high enough. You have reviewed the expectations for pupils in key stage 1 and are aware that they do not make strong progress, especially in Year 1.

Staff identify pupils' gaps in the pupils' learning and use teaching assistants, or small-group activities, to provide extra support in order to reduce the gaps. Staff manage behaviour well, using positive comments to help them remain enthusiastic and focused. Pupils regularly work with their peers, especially in literacy and numeracy sessions. You have provided extra support for staff when needed.

You have focused attention on the areas for development identified in the previous inspection. For example, the teaching of calculation in mathematics is more secure, questioning is often aimed at stretching pupils, and feedback to the pupils is now in line with the school's policy. You have developed a partnership with a group of local schools and are using this to develop helpful support. The governing body has developed its skills and expertise by reviewing membership, recruiting new governors and attending regular training.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff receive regular training and this has enabled them to feel confident about how to report any concerns that they might have. Staff and governors have received training about the 'Prevent' duty.

The school has responded positively to the further areas for development noted in the section 8 inspection of safeguarding carried out in September 2016. Information about safeguarding incidents are now collected using an electronic system, which helps senior staff to monitor and check on any concerns carefully. Senior staff

attended regular training in order to ensure that their skills and understanding of local issues are updated. You have made sure that you follow up any particular issues with social services and have not been afraid to pursue matters when you have felt that this has been necessary.

The school carries out appropriate checks to ensure that staff, visitors and volunteers are suitably qualified and experienced. Thorough records are kept, which show how information was collected, by whom and when.

Pupils say that they feel safe. They said that 'we get on well with each other' and that the school manages behaviour well. They are aware that a very small number of pupils sometimes find it difficult to follow the school's expectations for behaviour, but recognised that those pupils receive additional support. The very large majority of staff who completed a survey feel that behaviour is managed well, and none of the small number of parents who completed Parent View mentioned behaviour as a concern. Behaviour records are thorough. Pupils are made aware of how to stay safe when using the internet and when crossing roads.

You have improved the attendance of some of the pupils who are persistently absent. The number of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent is lower than it was and the attendance of the group has improved overall. Disadvantaged pupils are, however, still more likely to be persistently absent than others at the school.

Inspection findings

- School leaders are aware of the importance of promoting good attendance. The school uses first-day calls for non-attendance and regular follow-up calls. You have identified a key group of pupils who do not attend school regularly and you monitor them carefully.
- You have taken steps to deal with the most persistent cases of absence. You have challenged requests for authorised absence, such as for holidays in term time. This has meant that unauthorised absence has increased.
- You are working with agencies such as the local authority to tackle some of the problems faced by particular pupils. A very small number of pupils have specific needs that contribute to their poor attendance. Staff provide additional support and encouragement for these pupils. In many, but not all, cases this has improved their attendance and attitudes to learning.
- You have made it a priority to provide disadvantaged pupils with the support that they need in order to do well. The pupils receive additional support through individual sessions, group activities and, in some cases, extra support in lessons.
- None of the disadvantaged Year 6 pupils attained greater depth in the 2017 key stage 2 tests. School leaders are aware of the need to identify barriers to learning more rapidly, especially when they are in the Nursery, Reception and key stage 1, in order to improve the progress they make during these phases of their learning.

- The pupils are making good progress in Year 2. Previously, the proportion of pupils who have achieved the expected standard by the end of Year 2 has been below average and the most able pupils do not consistently achieve as well as they should.
- The pupils in Year 1 have not always made sufficient progress. This is because expectations have not been high enough consistently and the pupils' transition from the early years has sometimes taken too long. You have identified the need to improve teaching further in this key stage.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they identify and use the full range of options available to reduce persistent absence
- expectations for pupils' achievement are consistently high, especially in Year 1, so that a greater proportion of pupils make good progress from their starting points and the most able consistently achieve greater depth in their learning
- barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, are identified quickly enough in the Nursery and Reception classes, in order to improve the progress that they make across a range of subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

David Bray
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I checked on the safeguarding records and training for staff in safeguarding. I also checked on the arrangements for ensuring that adults working at, or visiting, the school are suitably qualified and experienced. I visited lessons with you throughout the school. We held discussions about safeguarding, school priorities and looked at examples of the school's monitoring information. We checked on a sample of pupils' work and discussed information about the pupils' progress, particularly focusing on those pupils who are disadvantaged. I spoke with a group of pupils. I met with two members of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary, school development plan and other information provided. We visited the school's breakfast club. I took account of the nine responses to Parent View as well as 14 responses to a staff survey.