

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Miss Nicky Bulpett
Head of School
Foxborough Primary School
Common Road
Langley
Slough
Berkshire
SL3 8TX

Dear Miss Bulpett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Foxborough Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1 December 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders, the trust 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 a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- sharpen the focus on whether pupils who are working below age-related expectations are catching up as quickly as they can, when monitoring the quality of teaching and assessment.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy, governors, representatives of the trust and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken

since the last inspection. I spoke informally with a small number of parents at the start of the school day. Together, we made brief visits to a number of classes across all three key stages. During these visits, I spoke with pupils and sampled some of their work. I reviewed the school improvement plan and a range of other documentation relevant to our discussions.

Context

The assistant head of school left in the summer. Linked to a planned reduction in the number of pupils who start each year in Reception, this position has not been refilled. The mathematics leader started in January 2017, and existing staff took up responsibilities for leading key stage 1 and the early years from September 2017. Two new teachers joined the school at the start of this academic year and three former trainees progressed to become newly qualified teachers. One teacher has returned from maternity leave.

Main findings

The school is improving. School leaders take a pragmatic approach in both acknowledging successes but remaining clear-sighted about the work still to do. The vision, drive and ambition of both trust and school leaders are clear. Expertise from across the trust has helped bring precision to the strategy for planning and securing improvements. Trust leaders have successfully encouraged a culture of honesty and frankness around self-evaluation. There is increasingly sharp use by leaders of school performance data, and other assessment information about how well pupils are doing, to identify and target priorities. Consequently, there is a clear sense of momentum in the drive to improve the school's overall effectiveness.

Pupils' outcomes are rising, although the rate of improvement remains uneven. The most marked improvement is evident in the early years. Last year, the large majority of children reached a good level of development, meaning that they were well prepared for Year 1. Throughout the early years environment, inside and out, there are plentiful opportunities for children to select activities that help them develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Key stage 1 attainment in 2017 was broadly similar to other pupils' nationally overall, preparing pupils well for key stage 2. However, the legacy of previous underachievement is still more prevalent in other year groups across key stage 2. Provisional results indicate that, across key stage 2, last year's leavers were catching up quickest in writing. Their progress in reading was also quicker than that of the previous cohort, but leaders have rightly identified lifting achievement in mathematics as a key priority for this year.

A range of factors affecting the current Year 6 cohort presents a number of additional challenges to leaders' drive to raise standards. This year group has the longest legacy of less-effective education. A considerable number of new pupils have joined part way through the key stage, including some joining in the current academic year with little or no English. The proportion of pupils who have special

educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is also high in this year group. Leaders are determined to make a difference where they can, pinpointing and tackling gaps in pupils' prior learning, and working hard to ensure that teaching for these pupils is consistently effective in addressing these issues.

The leadership of teaching has developed well since the previous inspection. There are several well-considered layers to leaders' strategy for improving teaching. Leaders use a combination of their checks on both the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils to target areas for continuing professional development and training. Teachers have opportunities to observe effective practice, sometimes modelled by senior leaders and other teachers within the school. Leaders subsequently monitor the difference any training or coaching has made to the quality of teaching in that particular area. When evaluating the quality of teaching, leaders rightly consider how well different groups of pupils are doing, such as those who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, the focus of leaders' quality assurance activities is not as consistently sharply focused as it could be on whether pupils are making enough progress to be catching up with others nationally. With difficulties recruiting teachers a very real challenge, leaders invest heavily in the development of trainee teachers. This is helping to create new professionals to support the longer-term stability of staffing. This strategic approach has proved effective in providing continuity, with a number of trainees taking up teaching positions in the school on completion of their training.

You have maintained a well-balanced focus on tackling the weaknesses of teaching identified at the previous inspection, without being blinkered to other emerging priorities as time goes on. Accelerating pupils' progress in mathematics is correctly a current priority. Anticipating and identifying pupils' possible misconceptions have been a key focus of training for teachers. However, we agreed that there was some inconsistency across the classes we visited. The frequency with which pupils are challenged through using their mathematics skills to problem-solve or reason is too variable.

Responsibility for meeting the particular needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is rightly shifting towards class teachers. During our tour of classrooms, I saw examples of suitable support from teachers and teaching assistants, as well as activities and resources being adapted to meet pupils' needs. Careful tracking of the school's behaviour policy shows improvements in behaviour over time. With rightly high expectations, you are clear that low-level disruption in some classes is still not as rare as you would like. During my visit, the atmosphere was calm and industrious. The level of productivity in pupils' books I reviewed showed that most pupils are working hard over time.

You evidently use the school's current improvement plan as a working and evolving document that is responsive to the changing picture in an improving school. Working with the trust, you make sure that what you are trying to achieve is clear and, where possible, measurable. The plan also includes helpful milestones detailing

reasonable time frames to help keep improvements on track. You have started to turn your attention to the wider curriculum, mapping out what skills you expect pupils to develop in subjects other than English and mathematics. School leaders have wisely drawn on the expertise of subject specialists from the trust's grammar school for some of the detail. However, achieving the benefits of this work in the classroom is still at an early stage. Consequently, you have yet to evaluate the difference it has made to the quality of pupils' experiences and education.

External support

The trust has a very clear and realistic understanding of the improvements made and the extent of the challenge still faced. Despite the school no longer being in local authority control, the trust embraces the support that Slough Borough Council offers. The same local authority adviser has continued to provide support and challenge since before the previous inspection. She has a good understanding and empathy for the journey the school is on. Consequently, she asks the right questions of school leaders and provides realistic feedback. Local authority support has particularly helped accelerate the pace of improvement in the early years. However, as the capacity of school leadership has grown, the extent of support has rightly decreased.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn
Her Majesty's Inspector