

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs Wendy Jane Hutchinson
Headteacher
Monkspath Junior and Infant School
Farmhouse Way
Shirley
Solihull
West Midlands
B90 4EH

Dear Mrs Hutchinson

Short inspection of Monkspath Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 10 May 2016 with Dawn White, Ofsted Inspector, 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 December 2010.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You, other leaders, staff and members of the governing body have made sure that the school continues to serve its community well and responds to local needs. Effective teaching and learning and excellent pastoral care for pupils are at the heart of the school's work. This is complemented by an extensive range of additional provision that supports pupils and their families. Parents value this a great deal. One summed up the views of many, saying: 'Monkspath is a friendly, welcoming school both to the pupils and their parents. I am very proud that my children are able to be part of such a wonderful school community'.

Your website states: 'Our values are the bedrock of what we do and believe in.' It is evident that leaders have established a clear set of values that permeate all aspects of school life. Pupils understand what the values mean and try hard to put them into practice. They spoke to inspectors about the importance of friendship and respect for other people, and about happiness, confidence and self-esteem. Staff reflect the school's values in their work with parents and pupils. From the early years onwards, staff have warm and positive relationships with their pupils and are ambitious for them to do as well as they can, both academically and in their personal development.

The school's last inspection highlighted considerable strengths in the care, guidance and support provided for pupils and in pupils' behaviour. It also pointed to the strong contribution the school makes to supporting families and the wider community and the effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being. These strengths have been maintained. The inspection also pointed out some aspects for further development, such as the need for improvement in pupils' attainment in writing and to make sure that the tasks set for pupils were sufficiently ambitious and challenging, especially for the most-able pupils.

You have dealt with these areas for improvement successfully. Pupils' attainment in writing has risen considerably, especially in key stage 2 where, for the past three years, it has been high at the end of Year 6. Attainment in writing has also improved at the end of the early years foundation stage and key stage 1, but not by so great a margin. Although the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels matches or exceeds that seen nationally in mathematics and reading, it lags a little behind in writing. Your plan for improvement rightly targets this as an area for attention. Work in pupils' books confirms that they are making good progress in developing their skills in writing over time, but the handwriting of some of the younger pupils is not easy to read because letters are badly formed. Pupils who did not attain the level expected for their age at the age of seven in previous years have been given support to help them catch up. This has been successful.

Teachers make sure that the most-able pupils are challenged and stretched by their tasks, with positive results. For example, last year all of the 16 pupils who attained highly in mathematics at the age of seven made the progress expected of them across key stage 2. Half of them made progress that was better than this and reached Level 6, which is much higher than the expected level for 11-year-olds.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has made sure that the school's policies and procedures for protecting children and keeping them safe reflect the most recent legislation and are read and fully understood by all members of staff. Because the staff group is large, you keep a careful record of who has completed safeguarding training. You make sure that staff who miss any training or who join the school part-way through the year have the chance to catch up as soon as possible. The training encompasses potential risks that pupils may face, for example, exposure to extremist views or to child sexual exploitation, and staff understand the need to be vigilant and to listen to the pupils. Where necessary, swift referrals are made to the local authority and careful records are kept of the outcomes. You say that the local authority acts quickly in response to any concerns you raise. You also make sure that you know the whereabouts of any pupil that leaves the school before removing him or her from the register. You carry out thorough checks on everyone who comes into contact with the children, including every parent who volunteers in the school.

Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they felt safe at school and were sure that there is always someone to turn to if they were worried about anything. The school's 'buddy' system encourages older pupils to look out for and take care of younger ones. The considerable number of staff and parents who completed questionnaires were confident that children are kept safe at Monkspath. Pupils are taught about the risks they may face, with a strong emphasis on keeping safe online. Posters around the school reinforce this message. Pupils who spoke to me said how much they appreciated what the pastoral team and other staff do to help them manage any difficulties they may have.

Inspection findings

- You, other leaders and governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and of where improvements need to be made as you strive to make the school's effectiveness outstanding. This is because you and other leaders carry out systematic and accurate checks on all aspects of the school's work, including the quality of teaching. You are open and honest about what is working well and what needs to be done next. The priorities listed in the school's development plan pinpoint the specific things that need to be done to make sure that the school's effectiveness continues to improve. You are quick to deal with any weaknesses and do not shirk from giving difficult messages when they are needed.
- You and the governing body are constantly seeking ways to enhance what Monkspath offers. For example, you were quick to seize the opportunity to reintegrate provision that was previously made under the Sure Start programme into the school. In September, you began to offer provision for two-year-olds, and this has proved very popular.
- You and the staff have put a good deal of effort into making sure that assessments of what pupils understand and can do are accurate and provide a secure basis for identifying the next steps and for checking progress. Staff share their assessments with one another and with teachers from other year groups and other schools. They have created a 'standards' file that illustrates what the age-related expectations look like in different subjects. Pupils have also taken standardised tests in reading and mathematics, which help the staff to check that their assessments are spot on.
- You and the staff keep a close eye on how well individuals and groups of pupils are doing. Pupils' achievement is frequently discussed so that any who appear to be falling behind are spotted quickly and interventions put in place to help them to catch up.
- The early years classes give children a good start to school life. The provision for two-year-olds is a warm and nurturing environment where children settle quickly and begin to learn. Parents who spoke to an inspector said how pleased they were with the progress their children are making, for example, in their speaking skills and in becoming more outgoing and independent. Staff have a good understanding of the welfare needs of these young children and the different ways in which they learn. The early years leader and the leader of the wraparound care and before- and after-school clubs work closely with staff to

make sure that transition between the different elements of the early years provision is successfully managed.

- Pupils make good progress, overall, across the early years and key stage 1, although it is stronger in mathematics and reading than in writing. In key stage 2, progress speeds up even more and almost all pupils, including the small proportion of disadvantaged pupils, build very well on their attainment at the age of seven. You believe that the impact of the work that you do to teach pupils to be confident, resilient learners really shows in key stage 2.
- Across the school, pupils behave very well. Behaviour at playtimes is lively but is well supervised. In lessons, pupils show interest and enthusiasm for their work and are keen to support one another. They talk confidently about what they are doing and learning. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to school life and to the wider community. During this inspection, they spoke about the work of the eco council, the school council and sports leaders and other ways that they are able to volunteer and help others. One boy mentioned that he has gained an even greater respect for the school meals supervisors now that he is helping out with younger pupils in the dining hall. The wide range of activities and clubs that the school offers enriches the curriculum substantially and contributes well to pupils' all-round development.
- The school is colourful and lively. Several parents wrote about the 'buzz' that they feel in school. It shows in the displays in corridors and classrooms that illustrate clearly the breadth and depth of the curriculum. For example, high-quality art work is shown alongside the outcomes of scientific investigations and includes work that pupils have done at home. Displays emphasise the school's values and show the work that is done to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' achievements in their academic work, sports and other activities are celebrated. Displays also support learning well in classrooms.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in line with the priorities in the school's development plan, action is taken to boost pupils' progress still further across the early years and key stage 1, so that their attainment in writing matches that in reading and mathematics, and gives them an even stronger starting point for key stage 2
- leaders review the approach to teaching handwriting and adapt it where necessary, so that pupils are taught to write legibly and fluently across the early years and key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, both inspectors met with you, the deputy headteacher, other leaders, teachers and members of staff. I also met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. We spoke with pupils in lessons and at playtime, and I met a small group of pupils to talk to them about their experiences of school. We visited classrooms in all key stages and spent time in the provision for two-year-olds and the wraparound provision for three-year-olds. I took account of the 28 responses to the online survey of the views of staff, and the 83 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. A small number of parents spoke to an inspector at the start of the day.

We looked at a range of documents, including information about pupils' attainment and progress, policies and procedures for protecting children and keeping them safe, the school's self-evaluation and the plan for improvement. I also looked at information on the school's website.