

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Lynda Stolic
Headteacher
Randlay Primary School
Randlay
Local Centre
Telford
Shropshire
TF3 2LR

Dear Mrs Stolic

Short inspection of Randlay Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since taking over as headteacher in September 2016, you have quickly put your own stamp on the school. You have built on the school's many existing strengths and addressed its fewer weaknesses with considerable success. For example, outcomes at the end of Year 2 which had been disappointing in 2016 have improved significantly this year. Similarly, results of the Year 1 phonics screening check, which had declined over recent years, have risen sharply.

Leaders know the school well, including what needs to improve. You have sought ideas and support from local schools, most notably from the Severn Teaching Alliance. You have been relentless in your determination to use good ideas from other schools to improve Randlay. Staff have embraced this year's changes with enthusiasm. They are a hard-working and committed team.

Governors are equally committed to the school and they provide you with effective challenge and support. They also continually seek ways in which they can do their job better. They now spend more time in school getting a first-hand view of the quality of education it provides. They attend additional training and are developing their expertise well.

Pupils enjoy school. They exemplify its values of respect, creativity, collaboration,

aspiration, courage and excellence. Most parents are happy with the education that their children receive. They believe that the school is well led and managed. One parent who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, summed up the views of several when they wrote, 'My child is very happy and enjoys going to school. I would recommend this school to other parents.'

At the previous inspection, leaders were tasked with raising the proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels in writing across the school and in mathematics in key stage 2. They were also tasked with improving teaching by giving teachers opportunities to learn from good practice.

Effective teaching is now evident throughout the school. Teachers plan together and share ideas well. They also visit other schools to pick up ideas that they then apply in school.

Mathematics is now well taught throughout the school and this is reflected in strong outcomes, especially at the end of key stage 2. The teaching of writing has been weaker over recent years, especially in key stage 1. However, this has improved considerably this year.

There is still room for improvement in teaching and pupils' outcomes. With this year's improvements, pupils are making progress from their starting points that are similar to other pupils nationally. You rightly aspire for them to make better progress than this.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that keeping pupils safe in school has an appropriately high profile. This year's changes to checks on visitors and to the start-of-day routines for pupils and parents have enhanced pupils' safety. Staff understand safeguarding policies and procedures. Comprehensive training means that they are alert to potential dangers and are confident to pass on any concerns they have about a pupil. Procedures to recruit staff safely are followed to the full. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Leaders pass on concerns to outside agencies, including the local authority, appropriately. However, leaders lack the confidence to challenge when they are unhappy with the local authority's actions. For instance, I saw an example of a personal education plan for a child looked after that lacked sufficient detail. Similarly, the school often does not receive minutes from core group meetings held to discuss child protection plans. In both of these cases, leaders have not challenged the local authority.

All pupils that I spoke with told me they feel safe in school. They said that bullying is rare and that there are several adults they would trust to deal with any problem that might arise.

They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential dangers, include those that might arise when using the internet. Recent

assemblies and workshops run by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children on the theme of 'speak out, stay safe' have enhanced pupils' knowledge of several safety issues.

Almost all parents who responded to Parent View and all parents that I spoke to said that their children feel safe in school.

Inspection findings

- The first area that I considered during the inspection was mathematics teaching in key stage 2. The teaching of mathematics is effective in all years, including key stage 2. It is well planned so that pupils develop strong arithmetic skills. Teachers use high-quality resources that encourage pupils to think deeply as they solve problems, rather than simply repetitively practising similar questions. Teachers routinely ask pupils to 'explain' and 'prove' and this develops deeper understanding of the topic they are studying. Most pupils enjoy mathematics. Although in recent years boys have made quicker progress than girls, I found no evidence of this being the case for current pupils.
- The inspection's second focus area was on writing in key stage 1. Although over recent years standards in writing have improved in key stage 2, weaker teaching has seen standards remain below average in key stage 1. For example, in 2016 only 31% of pupils achieved the expected standard by the end of Year 2. You rightly made this a top priority this year. Many actions have taken place aimed at improving writing. Pupils are encouraged to become enthusiastic writers using school trips to inspire their writing. A whole-school focus on using a cursive script has seen pupils' handwriting improve considerably. Writing in pupils' books shows considerable progress over this year. For example, I looked at books belonging to pupils in Year 2. They showed rapid improvement in the presentation, quality and quantity of writing over this year. Writing outcomes at the end of Year 2 this year have improved significantly, with more than 70% of pupils reaching the expected standard.
- Next, I looked at Year 1 phonics teaching because these outcomes had declined to below average over the last two years. In September, you quickly recognised the teaching of phonics as a weakness and made it another high priority. Consequently, leaders trained all teachers and teaching assistants. They also offered help to parents. You invested in new resources including reading books that provide a better link to the school's phonics scheme. Through the year, leaders have carried out regular checks on the teaching of phonics and on pupils' progress. The impact of these actions is apparent in the sharp increase in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in this year's phonic screening check.
- Improved teaching of phonics has been a key part of your aim to improve the teaching of reading, especially in key stage 1. Pupils, especially the less able, are now increasingly applying their phonic knowledge to their reading. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard by the end of Year 2 in reading this year has also improved.

- The inspection's final focus area was on whether high standards of pupils' behaviour and attendance had been maintained since the previous inspection. Pupils' attendance remains higher than the national average for primary schools. All groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, attend regularly. Pupils behave well in lessons. They are keen to learn and they work hard. They work well together or by themselves as appropriate. At break and lunchtime, pupils generally play together sensibly. They are caring and considerate to each other. I spoke with many pupils during the inspection and found them to be articulate, courteous and polite.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching continues to improve in key stages 1 and 2 so that pupils' progress accelerates
- they challenge the local authority whenever they are not satisfied with its actions with regard to vulnerable pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Alun Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team. I visited several classes during the day with senior leaders, where we observed teaching and learning and spoke with pupils about their work. I talked with many pupils in lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime. I met with the chair of the governing body. I scrutinised several documents including your self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, and safeguarding and child protection records. I talked with several parents as they dropped their children off at the start of the school day. I considered 36 responses to Parent View, including 12 'free-text' comments and two responses from members of staff to the online inspection questionnaire.