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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Sarah Mills
Headteacher
Stockton-on-the-Forest Primary School
The Village
Stockton-on-the-Forest
York
North Yorkshire
YO32 9UP

Dear Mrs Mills

Short inspection of Stockton-on-the-Forest Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Governors and the local authority have confidence in your abilities and your capacity to maintain the high standards now seen in school.

Stockton-on-the-Forest Primary School is a school where pupils are safe and feel safe. Pupils enjoy being at school and report that learning is fun and challenging. Parents are also pleased that their children make good progress and that they receive useful information about how well their children are doing and how to help them at home. Pupils and parents report that bullying is very rare and behaviour is good. Teaching is strong across the school and helps pupils to make good progress across all subjects. Teachers provide pupils with challenging work and ensure that pupils understand what they have to do. This also helps pupils to work independently and to improve their work. In general, teachers have high expectations and this is seen in the pace pupils work at and from the progress they make. However, you have rightly identified that in key stage 2 pupils' presentation of their work is not good. Despite practising their handwriting skills regularly and maintaining high standards of such in dedicated sessions, their handwriting in everyday learning is not good. Your teachers do not challenge this, which means pupils do not take enough pride in their learning. Behaviour is good overall and this ensures that pupils are ready to learn and they feel safe. At times, at playtime, some of the ball games played mean younger children are reluctant to go to certain areas. You have already seen this and plans are in place to address this by building a designated ball games area for the playground.

At the last inspection, inspectors identified two main areas for improvement, the first of which was to improve attainment in writing in key stage 2. Inspectors added to this by suggesting you include more trips and visits to raise pupils' enthusiasm for writing. Writing attainment at key stage 2 has improved significantly since the last inspection. There are also more opportunities for pupils to go on trips and to benefit from visitors who come into the school. Furthermore, there are lots of opportunities for pupils to read and this helps to develop a passion for different genres of books, as well as different authors, all of which, in turn, helps pupils write well. The second area for improvement was to improve the outdoor provision in the early years area so that there were more engaging activities and opportunities for children to learn outside. Again, you have addressed this really well and the outdoor area is bigger with more varied activities available. These activities meet children's needs well.

You understand the school well and, alongside other leaders and the governors, you have an accurate view of the school. You know what you do well and understand where improvements are needed. You listen to advice and are ambitious for the pupils, all of which means the school has remained good since the last inspection. This is seen by your own monitoring information which shows that you have already identified key areas for improvement for the school, including pupils' presentation of their work in key stage 2, and the need for a designated ball game area in the playground to ensure that pupils feel even safer.

Since the last inspection, attendance has fluctuated and in 2017 it declined. At the same time, the number of pupils who were persistently absent increased. However, since that time, the school has taken effective action to improve attendance and to work with families where this is an issue. This has resulted in improved attendance for all groups currently so that it is now above the national average.

The curriculum is engaging and alongside your work with families this also ensures that pupils are keen to be in school every day. Pupils report that they enjoy the work they do across all subjects and that often work is linked across the curriculum. In addition, opportunities to go on trips and work with visitors in school brings the learning alive for them, which supports their willingness to participate fully in their learning. As well as supporting classroom learning, these experiences also help pupils to understand life beyond their everyday experiences, including the rich diversity of British life. These experiences, alongside other events, such as assemblies, help pupils to keep safe online and to understand the need to celebrate and respect differences in people. Pupils enjoy learning, for example, about other faiths and cultures and report that they find this very interesting.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors make sure pupils are safe. This is done by ensuring that all policies are up to date and regularly reviewed. In turn, this makes sure that training for staff, governors and volunteers in school is also up to date. All adults working with pupils in school are aware of their responsibilities in keeping children safe and they know what to do if they have a concern. Leaders are also well trained and

work effectively with different external agencies to support pupils and their families, as necessary. You maintain records of incidents of concern methodically, which facilitates monitoring and sharing of information as appropriate.

Bullying is rare, as records show, and as pupils and parents report. There are also very few incidents of seriously inappropriate behaviour and records show that pupils behave well. All of which help to keep pupils safe at school.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, I focused on pupils' progress in key stage 1 and their improved attainment in mathematics. I also focused on pupils' progress and attainment in writing because this has not been as strong as that in mathematics. From my investigations, I can see that there is a strong, systematic approach to teaching in mathematics in key stage 1 which helps pupils regularly learn their basic skills. They also use and apply their knowledge in a variety of ways which further supports their progress. Furthermore, this strong practice is now embedded at key stage 2, where mathematics outcomes have not previously been as good as those in key stage 1. Progress is now good in mathematics at key stage 2. Following a dip in standards in writing at key stage 1 last year, you have focused on this aspect. You have been successful in supporting better progress in this area and pupils are now writing well in key stage 1. For a number of years, writing attainment and progress have also been in line with the national average at key stage 2. Clearly, the school has met its target from the last inspection.
- Another area that I looked at was the school's provision for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Both groups attract extra funding. You track the progress of these two groups of pupils very closely and now ask all teachers to identify how they are supporting these pupils. Your own monitoring systems also focus on how well these pupils are doing day to day. These efforts have all ensured that where these pupils underachieve, this is identified early and teachers respond quickly. As a result, these pupils are currently making good progress.
- During the inspection, I also wanted to understand how well pupils behave. Attendance and the number of exclusions have both been an issue since the last inspection but, in the last year, you have worked particularly effectively to make important improvements in this area. This has led to improved attendance, which is now above average, and led to a reduction in the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent, which is now below average.
- Pupils' conduct is also good and they have positive attitudes to learning, as their regular and prompt attendance shows. However, pupils in key stage 2 do not take enough pride in their learning and handwriting is often not neat enough and too few join their letters when writing. In addition, general presentation is not consistently good. For example, pupils do not always use rulers when drawing lines in mathematics, or drawing a graph in science. Teachers do not challenge this and they do not have a set of clear and consistent rules to promote high standards of presentation across the school. You have identified this in your own

monitoring as an area to work on. At playtime, pupils play well together and older pupils often play with younger children so they grow in confidence. Pupils get along well and understand the need to share and take turns with the equipment available. However, at times, the use of balls in the playground is disconcerting for the younger children. You have seen this and, as such, have allocated funding to build a ball area for the playground. This means balls can be played with safely in a designated zone of the playground, leaving others free to play and socialise without feeling wary.

- I also looked at the quality of the provision for children in the early years. Firstly, you have improved the outdoor area. There is more space now for children and there are more varied activities for children to choose from. This also means there are better opportunities now for children to develop their skills and learning across all the areas of early learning, including in reading, writing, mathematics, and physical development. As a result, children continue to do well in the early years and are well prepared to cope with the curriculum in Year 1. The quality of teaching is good and is supported by thorough and accurate assessment, which provides adults with a clear understanding of what children can do, and where there are gaps in their learning.
- I focused on your whole-school assessment systems as well to see how they support teaching and pupils' learning. As in the early years, teachers understand how to assess pupils so that gaps in pupils' knowledge are quickly identified. This information is then used to plan activities for pupils to move them on swiftly in their learning.
- Governors are committed to the school and they have an accurate understanding of the school's work. Many have been with the school for many years, while others are new and add well to the role. All are valuable to the governing body because they are passionate about ensuring the pupils get a good education. Governors challenge you accordingly and well. They have confidence in your work but also rightly question and check that leaders are doing all they can to support pupils' learning and well-being.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers in key stage 2 promote high expectations of pupils' presentation so that pupils understand the importance of taking more pride in their learning, especially in their handwriting
- all pupils feel comfortable in the playground, especially the youngest children, by providing separate areas for ball games to be played.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona McNally
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited a number of classes in school to observe teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. I also looked at a wide range of pupils' books from all year groups, across a variety of subjects. I met with you and your governors and with other senior and middle leaders. I also held a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority. I looked at the school's information about the safeguarding of pupils and examined behaviour, attendance and bullying records. I also checked a range of other documentation, such as your self-evaluation, your school development plans and your monitoring information. I held formal discussions with pupils from key stage 1 and key stage 2 and spoke informally to pupils during breaktime. I also listened to four pupils read from Year 2 and Year 6. I considered the 33 parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke to a number of parents in the playground as they dropped their children off at school.