

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Miss Regan
Great Bridge Primary School
Mount Street
Great Bridge
Tipton
West Midlands
DY4 7DE

Dear Miss Regan

Short inspection of Great Bridge Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

With other senior leaders and a dedicated staff you have created a happy school where pupils are well supported. The school's values of 'all equal, all valued, all achieving' are rooted in every aspect of your work. As a result, there is an ethos of care and mutual respect and a very positive learning environment. Pupils demonstrate self-confidence and a love of learning. This was captured well by one of the youngest pupils who invited me to: 'Come and see our science work on carnivores, herbivores and omnivores. You will find it very interesting.'

Governors bring a wide range of skills to their roles. As a result of regular monitoring, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They understand how well pupils perform in school and in relation to other pupils nationally. This puts governors in a strong position to challenge and support the school effectively so that it improves further. They are proud of the school and have high aspirations for it.

Almost all parents and carers who spoke to me at the start of the school day, or who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaires, were positive about the school. They shared many personal examples of how children with particular needs or abilities are welcomed and well cared for. Parents' comments included: 'I cannot praise the staff highly enough. They go above and beyond all expectations to help

and support the children.'

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching further so that a greater proportion of teaching is outstanding. Since then, there have been changes in teaching and support staff. You have restructured leadership roles and appointed an additional deputy headteacher. This has strengthened the school's capacity to secure and sustain improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. Your collaborative approach to professional development enables teachers to work together and learn from each other within and beyond the school. Staff appreciate this. There is a vibrant culture of professional learning and teamwork across the school.

Leaders' work on improving the teaching of writing has been particularly effective. Pupils are proud of the attractive displays of their writing in classrooms and around the school. Over the last two years, pupils' progress in writing, by the end of Year 6, has been significantly better than the national average. The proportion of pupils working at higher levels, particularly in reading and mathematics, is below the national average. You have rightly identified this as a priority for improvement in the current academic year.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You and the parent support adviser are unwavering in your determination to follow through every concern. Together, you have an excellent understanding of the issues facing the community. You work closely with outside agencies, including the police and the local authority. The parent support adviser works closely with families and offers extensive support where needed. The records and day-to-day notes reflect your diligence.

Governors work closely with the school to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are thorough. They have put effective systems in place to carry out checks on different aspects of safeguarding, including online safety. Through regular training, staff and governors have an up-to-date knowledge of procedures and understand the importance of being vigilant and identifying pupils' needs early.

Staff ensure that all medical and therapeutic needs are met to a high standard. Pupils with significant additional needs are cared for with sensitivity and compassion.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry for this inspection related to early years. I wanted to check whether children are making strong progress especially in early reading and mathematics.
- Children enter early years with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age. This is particularly the case in communication, language and literacy skills. Leaders have recognised that more can be done to improve early

reading provision and have taken effective actions to address this. They have re-organised phonics teaching groups to ensure that phonics teaching better matches children's stages of development. A new phonics teaching schedule has been introduced into nursery. Reading books have been streamlined so that children can more easily apply the skills taught in phonics sessions when they read independently. In 2018, the proportion of pupils reaching expected standards in the Year 1 phonics check continued to improve and was in line with the national average. This improvement work continues.

- Work in children's learning journeys shows that provision for the most able children is well adapted to support and challenge them in mathematics. The early years leaders make sure that assessments of what children already know and can do are used effectively to identify children's next steps in learning and provide challenging activities. Leaders continue to work to ensure that the proportion of children meeting and exceeding a good level of development increases.
- I also wanted to check what leaders are doing to make sure that the most able pupils achieve well in other key stages, particularly in reading and mathematics. You have also identified this as a priority for improvement and are taking appropriate actions to address it.
- The reading leader has introduced a structured approach to the teaching of reading across the school. Pupils enjoy working as reading buddies and reading ambassadors. This is raising the profile of reading. In class reading sessions, older pupils read confidently and discuss their reading maturely. However, many pupils do not read widely beyond school. This limits the breadth of their reading and has a direct impact on their ability to read at greater depth. Staff continue to work hard to support this and engage the support of parents and carers.
- The new mathematics leader is taking appropriate actions to ensure that teaching challenges the most able pupils in mathematics. There is increasing evidence in pupils' mathematics books of problem-solving activities. This enables pupils to recall and apply their mathematical skills confidently. Work to develop pupils' reasoning skills and use of mathematical language continues. This is to ensure that teachers develop the depth of pupils' mathematical learning.
- Leaders have correctly identified the school's priorities for improvement. Appropriate actions are being taken to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged to work at higher standards, particularly in reading and mathematics. However, improvement plans do not set out precise criteria to measure the impact of these actions on pupils' progress. Refining these plans is an important next step so that leaders and governors can easily check on the effectiveness of various actions and decide what is working well and what needs to be changed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- school improvement plans include precise success criteria so that leaders can easily check the impact of actions on pupils' progress, decide what is working well and what needs to be changed

- the school continues to work with parents and carers to encourage pupils to read widely, for purpose and pleasure, within and beyond school.

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

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the two deputy headteachers. I also met with subject and phase leaders and two members of the governing body. I had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. I visited early years and key stage 1 classes with you, where we observed teaching and learning and looked at pupils' work. I visited year 6 classes with the deputy headteacher and spoke to pupils about their reading. I listened to a group of year 1 pupils read, looked at work in children's learning journeys and spoke informally with other pupils during the day.

I took account of 26 written responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire. I also took account of 24 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, along with comments made personally to me by several parents bringing their children to school at the start of the day. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans and information about safeguarding.