

14 June 2019

Mrs Frances Swallow
Headteacher
Marsden Infant and Nursery School
Brougham Road
Marsden
Huddersfield
West Yorkshire
HD7 6BN

Dear Mrs Swallow

Short inspection of Marsden Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 4 June 2019, 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 May 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You acted on its recommendations with care and thoughtfulness and have continued with these improvements.

You take a thorough approach when reviewing how well the school is doing and engage all members of the school community in this. You have managed the turbulence in the leadership of the early years in the last few years effectively. You and the early years team have ensured that the outcomes for the children during this period have remained buoyant.

Governors are extremely well informed about the progress the school is making. They talk knowledgeably of how they use their visits to school to talk with the staff and pupils, look at pupils' work and view teachers' planning. They then skilfully compare these observations with the outcomes for pupils you report on before each meeting. This means they question and support you effectively in the decisions you make.

You have ensured that the curriculum truly engages the pupils. It is embedded in the community through such activities as the 'bushcraft skills' and the 'Gruffalo hunt' along the banks of the canal, as well as joining in celebratory parades through the village. You capture the skills of parents and grandparents, for example by deploying them as reading buddies. You use the additional sports funding wisely. You have developed the high-quality resources in the playground so that pupils are

more engaged in physical activities during breaktimes, as well as securing additional coaching in a variety of sports. Over half of the pupils reported that they felt their physical well-being was well catered for, with most pupils saying they now attended after-school activities.

Your support for the most vulnerable pupils in the school is exemplary. You ensure that the individual needs of these pupils are met and that pupils feel safe and secure. Where necessary, you have sought additional training for staff supporting pupils who present specific areas of concern. This has meant that these pupils settle into school and soon begin to learn because of the strong attachments you and your team make with them. This is similarly reflected in the ways you work with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their families. Parents spoke of how inclusive the school is for all pupils.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. You ensure that they are always highly focused on learning during the school day. They work extremely well together or individually. They can talk about their learning, both in terms of what they are studying and the skills and strategies they are using. They are polite to each other and adults. They are very confident and feel very secure in the relationships with their teachers. This can be seen in the humour they use in some of their responses to teachers' questions and the smiles they have on their faces as they enjoy the challenge of learning at this school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You regularly hold staff training so that everyone's knowledge of safeguarding issues is up to date. In any work you do to the building, safeguarding is a priority. The developments since the last inspection have further secured the safety of pupils through the installation of internal security doors. You hold workshops for parents, delivered by national agencies, on keeping children safe when on the internet. Parents and pupils report that they feel safe and secure in school.

You closely monitor any pupils causing concern. The detailed records you keep clearly demonstrate your skills in addressing and resolving issues with parents. You refer on to other agencies where appropriate and follow these up to make sure agreed actions are completed.

Inspection findings

- You have strengthened the role of the subject leaders. They have received training to enhance their leadership skills and understanding of their roles. Since the previous inspection, they have run training sessions for their areas of responsibility and undertaken a variety of monitoring activities, such as reviewing planning and pupils' work. They have observed their colleagues' practice. Using this evidence, they have developed detailed action plans for their subject areas, which are broken down into smaller termly milestones in order to better measure improvements. These are closely monitored and reviewed by governors, who challenge any slowing down in progress, thus holding subject leaders to account

for their areas of work.

- You were aware of the dip in outcomes for pupils in the year following the last inspection. You strongly questioned yourselves to identify why this had happened and you swiftly put in place actions to bring attainment back in line with levels seen nationally. However, you are aware that attainment in writing remains slightly lower than in other areas. This was confirmed during the inspection when we looked at the quality of pupils' work. Governors continue to play their part effectively, by supporting, challenging and monitoring pupils' progress to avoid any repeat of such a dip, and they focus sharply on improvements in writing. You frequently undertake pupil's progress meetings, and should any progress falter, a range of personalised interventions are put in place to turn this around. In between these meetings staff routinely reflect on and share best practice with each other to support individual pupils before their progress slows down markedly.
- While there are only a few disadvantaged pupils, they all make good progress, and many leave with skills and abilities at levels typical for their age. This is because you use the small amount of additional funding you receive successfully in order to put in place individual support plans that address the specific needs of each pupil.
- You have ensured that problem-solving and reasoning skills are now firmly embedded in mathematics teaching. In the activities we observed together, we saw pupils absorbed in solving problems using a variety of strategies – demonstrating their mastery of mathematics. Pupils who are less able were well supported to achieve their individual targets, but still used problem-solving strategies, guided by the good use of questioning from support staff. In other activities, we saw younger children ably using their reasoning skills to solve problems of position by describing where particular objects were in relation to each other.
- You have made certain that adults across the early years unit have consistently high expectations of children. Continuous provision is well established across the unit and supports children's learning when they are indoors. The most able use the resources provided to support them in writing short sentences. With skilled adult intervention they can write more complex sentences and retell stories. The younger children's skills are also showing rapid improvement as they look to the older ones as role models. The early years outdoor provision has been further enhanced to provide a highly stimulating and rich learning environment. However, adult intervention in this area is less successful at supporting learning and developing literacy and play. For example, there is little opportunity for writing, and adult interventions do not develop children's critical thinking skills.
- You and the team provide many high-quality opportunities for parental engagement. Because of your 'open-door' approach, teachers are always available for discussion about any achievements or concerns. Parents describe how the school 'app' provides lots of information, and a secure channel to exchange individual messages. The home-school diary is used effectively to share learning targets, and achievements at home are celebrated. Parents talk enthusiastically about projects they have shared with their children at home, such

as researching about recycling, or designing and building models to demonstrate aspects of the Great Fire of London.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in the early years unit, adult interventions to enhance children's learning are as effective outdoors as they are indoors
- staff across the school have equally high expectations of the quality of pupils' writing, so that attainment improves by the end of 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 Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Dorrity
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The focus of this inspection was to affirm that the standards identified at the previous Section 5 inspection have been maintained, and to find out how well children and the nursery were progressing. I held a variety of meetings with you and your staff. I observed several sessions jointly with you in the early years and key stage 1. I considered a range of documentation, including minutes of governors' meetings, notes about their visits into school and records of your observations of teaching and learning.

I met with the chairperson and two other members of the governing body and spoke with a representative of the local authority. I considered the 50 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and I spoke with six parents. I also took account of the 16 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey, 39 pupil questionnaires, and I spoke with six staff.