

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



19 March 2018

Mr Jeremy Hughes
West Town Lane Academy
West Town Lane
Brislington
Bristol
BS4 5DT

Dear Mr Hughes

Short inspection of West Town Lane Academy

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 2018 with Ben Jordan, 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 June 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You ensure that the school continues to be a caring and inclusive environment; the whole team shares a strong commitment to the values of 'respect, self-discipline, integrity and courtesy'. Your high aspirations for all pupils, regardless of their starting points, lie at the heart of all your priorities. Relationships between pupils and teachers are particularly warm and supportive. Pupils are courteous and friendly and they express confidence in the support that the school provides. They speak highly of the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. 'You can express yourself and you are not judged. There is something for everyone', is a comment which typifies their views. Pupils who spoke to an inspector and who completed the online questionnaire said that the rare instances of bullying are dealt with swiftly and well by adults. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers agree that their children are very well cared for at school.

West Town Lane is a growing school. Since the previous inspection, the key stage 2 cohort has increased in size. In addition, governors have added nursery classes to the school roll. In these classes, children settle happily to their learning and are thriving in a safe and engaging environment. Strong leadership of early years classes has ensured that new children are well integrated and that all children are making progress which prepares them very well for Year 1.

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to raise expectations of the most able pupils so that more attain the higher levels. The achievement and progress of the most able pupils have risen steadily. In 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics rose to be in line with the national average. While you are pleased with this improvement, you rightly identify that the progress that the most able pupils make across all classes can still be too variable.

Another area for improvement raised at the previous inspection was to ensure that staff lines of communication with leaders were clearer, so that any concerns could be addressed. Leaders have done much to make sure that staff are well supported and listened to. Consequently, staff morale is high.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements and responsibilities are understood well by staff; they report concerns to the designated safeguarding leads promptly. Staff record reports carefully and leaders follow up rigorously. You work in partnership with outside agencies to provide support for pupils and families. You have made sure that staff training is up to date, including training on the government's 'Prevent' strategy, and training for governors. During the inspection, inspectors noted a number of omissions on the school's single central register of safe recruitment checks. Although you rectified these omissions before the end of the inspection, governors admitted that their oversight of safeguarding policy and procedures has not been robust enough in the past.

Pupils feel cared for and safe and report that they know they are listened to when raising a concern. The school's curriculum helps pupils to understand e-safety and helps to prevent cyber bullying. They work with adults to make sure that the school is harmonious and know that bullying is rare.

Your careful tracking of attendance and the work of the school's learning mentor alongside you and external professionals have ensured that rates of persistent absence are lower than those seen nationally. Your current records show that these improvements are being sustained. You work promptly and with careful attention to the individual needs of pupils when they do not attend regularly enough.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the lines of enquiry to consider during the day. These included considering how leaders ensure strong progress for those with low starting points in reading. Furthermore, the inspection explored how pupils who are capable of achieving the highest standards in mathematics are challenged to do so. Also, the inspection focused on how leaders and governors provide challenge so that pupils make as much progress as they can, and attend as regularly as they can.
- Recent results suggested that the progress of pupils with low starting points, including those who are disadvantaged, in reading was not as strong as it should be. You explained that this was a priority for improvement at the school.

- Support for disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 means that gaps in their learning have diminished. These pupils read frequently in school to an adult. Leaders have improved the range and suitability of reading materials available, as well as making regular and precise use of the assessments of pupils' progress. Teachers of this group keep detailed records of what pupils can and cannot do and use the information to decide on pupils' next steps. Consequently, those who are disadvantaged in key stage 1 now achieve as well as their peers in reading.
- This is not consistent across the whole school, however. Analysis of assessment information and observations in classrooms showed that other pupils who struggle with reading are not making such strong progress. Those who need to catch up in Year 2 and key stage 2 experience difficulties in making predictions and inferences from what they have read. Sometimes the questions that adults ask do not probe their understanding deeply enough, and progress slows as a result. You acknowledged that there is still more to be done to improve progress in this area.
- Your own evaluation of the school rightly identifies challenge for the most able in mathematics as an area for improvement. We visited classrooms and viewed pupils' workbooks together and with the leader for mathematics. We saw that pupils across the school show strong understanding and fluency in number, and that they use teachers' feedback promptly to correct errors and misconceptions, in line with the school's assessment policy. Pupils do not, however, make such strong progress in applying number facts and developing deeper reasoning. Measures to improve problem solving and the level of challenge that pupils receive are still in their early stages. Our observations showed that middle-ability pupils and the most able are not routinely given tasks which match their abilities. As a result, some pupils who can reach the highest standards sometimes repeat learning which does not challenge them.
- Governors fulfil their responsibilities to provide challenge to leaders and scrutinise information about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. However, the process is not focused enough and lacks precision. Governors check how well leaders use the funding for disadvantaged pupils and how well these pupils are doing. They have deployed resources and checked carefully to make sure that disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 make strong progress in reading.
- Their visits to the school help them to check the school's priorities for themselves. However, governors' other plans for improvement are not sufficiently detailed to allow them to review regularly what is or is not working well at the school. Governors are not always given all the information they need to oversee the school's priorities for improvement. This limits their effectiveness in holding leaders accountable for other aspects of the school's work.
- Governors have received up-to-date training on safeguarding. They are very mindful of their responsibilities for the well-being of pupils and staff. However, they have recently overlooked some critical aspects of their oversight of safeguarding. Governors agree that these roles and responsibilities will need to be redefined as a matter of urgency.
- Subject leaders understand the strengths and weaker aspects of their subject areas well. They speak knowledgably about the performance of different groups of pupils. Nevertheless, they agree with inspectors that they do not routinely measure

the impact of their actions on improving teaching and learning across the school. As a result, the impetus of school improvement has slowed. You recognise that subject leaders need to make more focused checks on how well pupils are progressing and ensure that new initiatives to improve teaching are being followed consistently.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders and governors at all levels ensure that, through careful monitoring, they maintain an accurate oversight of their areas of responsibility, particularly the oversight of statutory recruitment checks
- pupils of middle and high ability receive regular opportunities to apply and deepen their mathematical thinking
- those who need additional help with their reading, especially in key stage 2, receive sufficient support to develop their understanding of what they read.

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

Yours sincerely

Claire Mirams
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors had a meeting with you and your deputy head teacher. In this meeting, we considered various assessment information as well as the school's current improvement priorities. I also met with members of the governing body and spoke to your school improvement officer. We met with your middle leaders who are responsible for standards in mathematics and reading, and together we scrutinised pupils' workbooks, listened to pupils read and carried out a learning walk across the school. The team inspector met with a group of pupils and discussed how they feel about the school and considered their viewpoints on attitudes to behaviour, bullying and keeping safe, including online. We also scrutinised various safeguarding records, as well as meeting with your leader for safeguarding.

We also considered 49 responses to the pupil survey, 57 responses to the staff survey and 99 parent responses to the online survey Parent View.