

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Andrew Hale
Headteacher
Maidensbridge Primary School
Beachcroft Road
Wall Heath
Kingswinford
West Midlands
DY6 0HX

Dear Mr Hale

Short inspection of Maidensbridge Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 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.

As headteacher, you have continued to build on and develop the quality of teaching and learning for all pupils. You and your staff demonstrate a resolute commitment and determination to ensuring that pupils are happy, safe, and receive a well-rounded education. The sense of community permeates strongly throughout the school. Parents appreciate and value the care and support provided to their children. Typical comments in questionnaire returns include, 'Mr Hale and his hard-working team should take great credit for the way they run the school. A friendly, community spirit is always evident when visiting.'

Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. They say that they 'love school' and that their teachers 'make learning fun'. A wide range of subjects are taught and interesting topics help develop and extend pupils' writing ability well. There are, however, fewer opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in subjects other than mathematics. Overall, the curriculum is enriched well and music and sport are particularly well promoted. A strong emphasis is placed on improving pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development together with their health and well-being. A range of activities such as the Year 6 residential visit, together with visitors and clubs, add to pupils' enjoyment of school and provide memorable experiences for them.

You have partially addressed the key issues raised at the previous inspection. Due to the small nature of the school, teachers work closely together and as a result, good practice is shared regularly. However, there is limited evidence in pupils' books of pupils applying their numeracy skills in a range of subjects and, in general, progress in mathematics is still not as strong as progress in English.

Most pupils achieve well and reach or exceed the levels expected in reading and writing. However, work remains to be done in accelerating progress in mathematics in key stage 2 in order to increase the proportion of pupils working at greater depth and attaining higher standards. You and your leadership team have introduced a new assessment system and regularly track pupils' achievement. However, this system is still in its infancy and needs further development in order to filter the information so that governors and staff are provided with a clear overview of the progress rates of current cohorts and groups. Similarly, the school development plan needs refinement so that it mirrors areas identified in the school's self-evaluation. Although not involved in its formulation, governors have rightly evaluated this document and have asked you to include measurable milestones and precise targets to allow them to monitor the success of actions taken. They are keen to hold leaders more stringently to account.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a good culture of safeguarding within the school. The designated leader has a clear understanding of her responsibilities and the importance of keeping children safe. Timely referrals are made when concerns are raised and a relentless approach used to chase external agencies if they are slow to respond. Clear record-keeping is in place and records are stored securely. Staff understand the correct procedures to follow as they receive relevant training, for example on recognising different forms of abuse and protecting pupils from extremism and radicalisation. You and your governors carry out rigorous safer recruitment checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Appropriate checks are also carried out for volunteers and other adults who work in school. These are all listed on the school's central record. The school has recently completed an extensive health and safety audit to pinpoint precisely where further areas can be improved. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe because guidance related to safety features regularly in lessons and assemblies. They are aware of different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and understand the dangers associated with using the internet. Pupils feel confident that they can report issues to adults and that their concerns will be listened to. They say that behaviour at the school is good and that bullying is rare. Anti-bullying ambassadors are elected, trained and on hand at breaktimes to deal with any incidents which arise. If they are unable to resolve the problem themselves, they know that they should report it to an adult. This peer system helps pupils feel safe and reassured.

Inspection findings

- Inspection evidence showed that self-evaluation is honest and accurate. Leaders and governors have an acute awareness of where the school is performing well and where further improvement is needed. Leadership is distributed effectively and subject leaders have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They lead training and are fully involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and providing support to colleagues, including those who are newly qualified. You and your staff work in close collaboration with local schools to share good practice and check that teachers' assessments are accurate and reliable.
- Governors have a broad range of experience and skills which they use well to support the school. They describe themselves as 're-energised' and are fully focused on holding leaders to account in order to support the school in its development. They have developed their own detailed action plan and evaluate this regularly. This enables them to know precisely where further improvement is needed. For example, while link governor roles have been created to further their knowledge of different subject areas, governors are keen to be more involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' progress through looking at pupils' workbooks. Governors visit school and report back their findings to the full governing body. They have a good understanding of the school's key priorities and have developed a general overview of the performance of different groups based on historic published data. However, the lack of summarised current assessment information limits their ability to further challenge leaders. This is because the recently introduced assessment system has not yet been developed to produce this information.
- While the school's self-evaluation document demonstrates a clear and accurate profile of where improvements are needed, the school development action plan does not mirror some of the key issues identified. A broad range of action plans, rather than focused priorities, are incorporated into the document. Some of these plans detract from or cloud the school's main areas for development. Objectives which refer to raising outcomes are also too vague and do not contain measurable milestones or targets which leaders and governors can monitor and evaluate.
- A small number of negative views were expressed on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, prior to the inspection. You were aware of this information and have already taken steps to conduct your own more detailed school survey and to reinforce your open-door policy to parents. A much wider number of responses collected in your autumn term survey portray a very positive picture of the school. Views and comments I gathered during the inspection, both from parent text comments and from face-to-face discussions, were also overwhelmingly positive. Parents of children in the early years are particularly appreciative of the weekly assessment updates they receive about their children's progress, and the home-school communication log which provides them with additional photographs and comments about notable events during the week. All parents, including the parents of older pupils, also receive termly reports about their child's progress. Communication with parents is therefore

good and many parents emphasised that where concerns were raised and discussed with staff, they were quickly resolved.

- Published assessment information suggests that in 2015 and 2016 boys achieved less well than girls in writing. The books checked showed that there were no discernible differences in the progress or quality of boys' writing in key stage 2 compared to that of girls; in fact some of the highest quality pieces of writing seen during the inspection were written by boys. Writing is taught well and teachers pay due attention to improving pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. A wide range of types of literature are covered and most pupils demonstrate that they are developing a neat and cursive style of handwriting. Nevertheless, you and your leadership team are aware that gender differences exist in other parts of the school, including in early years, and have targeted this area for further action.
- Published data also indicated that pupils with high prior attainment made less progress than other similar pupils nationally in mathematics. In relation to mathematics, pupils present their work methodically and neatly. Teachers plan interesting lessons which engage and motivate pupils. Good use is made of practical equipment and additional adults to support learning. Work is usually set at the right level for pupils of different abilities and a good range of problem-solving activities are incorporated which allow pupils to apply the skills learned. However, some pupils' reasoning skills are at an early stage of development and books showed limited evidence of pupils demonstrating this aspect of learning. Inspection evidence also found that, on occasion, some teaching does not challenge pupils well enough, particularly the most able, or encourage the use of wider mathematical concepts. For example, some pupils in key stage 2 used metre sticks to check their estimations of objects in the classroom or hall. Few, however, used the tape measures available to check objects which were round or curved or used centimetre and millimetre measurements in their recording.
- While most pupils attend regularly and attendance is above the national average, the attendance of some groups, for example disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, has been below average in recent years. You track attendance closely and take swift action to follow up any unexplained absence. You have introduced first day calling to check pupils' whereabouts, issue letters and call parents in to see you. There are positive signs that actions taken are effective. This year, the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved and is in line with the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has also improved and is now only slightly below national figures.
- Inspection findings are in agreement with parents' and pupils' views that pupils behave well. Pupils are polite and courteous and display good manners. They display positive attitudes to learning and there is very little disruption in lessons. Pupils have a good understanding of and adhere fully to the school's behaviour policy. All adults manage behaviour well. Records checked show that most incidents that occur are low level. These incidents are recorded and handled appropriately. Two fixed-term exclusions have been applied this year but have been implemented appropriately in accordance with the school's behaviour policy. This demonstrates that leaders take firm action to eliminate any instances of

poor behaviour in order to keep staff and pupils safe. Incidents are, however, few in number.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a greater proportion of pupils reach the higher standards in mathematics at the end of key stage 2, by making sure teachers increase the level of challenge for pupils, extend pupils' reasoning skills and provide more opportunities for pupils to apply their wider mathematical knowledge in a greater range of subjects
- the school's assessment system is further developed and leaders summarise the attainment and progress of current cohorts and different groups so there is a clear picture of how well pupils are progressing
- the school action plan is streamlined so that it focuses more sharply on the key priorities, contains measurable milestones and aligns more closely with the school's accurate self-evaluation.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, members of your leadership team and representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I discussed the work of the school with leaders, including the achievement of pupils and procedures in place for safeguarding. Together you and I observed teaching in Years 3, 4 and 5 and briefly visited Years R, 1 and 2. I looked at work in pupils' books, including those of pupils in Year 6 who were away on a residential visit. I spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons and talked with them at lunchtime to gather their views about the school.

I looked at a range of school documents, including reports from visiting headteachers on behalf of the local authority, your report to governors, and information about pupils' behaviour and attendance. I also reviewed the school's own evaluation of its work, together with the school development plan. I took account of the 116 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, together with additional text comments and an analysis of the school's own parent survey. Additional information was collected from parents at the end of the school day. There were 12 responses to the staff questionnaire and 18 pupil questionnaire returns. The views expressed were fully considered.