

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



19 June 2019

Mrs Ros Munro
Headteacher
Willow Tree Primary School
2 Greenland Street
Salford
M6 5TJ

Dear Mrs Munro

Short inspection of Willow Tree Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 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 June 2015.

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 senior leaders have continued to act in the best interests of the pupils. The work that you and your team do to provide a good-quality education for the pupils is appreciated by all within the school community. Overall, pupils are making good progress throughout key stage 1 and the outcomes achieved at key stage 2 in the 2018 end-of-year tests were impressive. You have tackled the priorities identified at the previous inspection and, with your team, ensure that pupils, including the disadvantaged, learn well and make progress.

You and your staff work as a team at Willow Tree. You have provided determined and energetic leadership. Working with the deputy headteacher, you have maintained the quality of classroom practice and introduced a range of initiatives that have further strengthened learning and teaching in the school. These improvements are based on your own careful analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development. Staff understand the need to work hard for all the pupils. You provide them with good opportunities to develop their skills as classroom teachers. You have ensured that all staff have opportunities to lead and this is reflected in the high quality of your senior and middle leadership teams.

During the inspection, I spent time walking through the school with you, your deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers. What was clear was that all staff and pupils were working hard to achieve good educational outcomes. All staff were working towards ensuring that your vision for the school was implemented. They were committed to ensuring that the pupils benefited from positive experiences throughout the school day. From your records of classroom visits and in talking to

staff, it is clear that you are frequently in the classrooms, supporting staff and pupils to achieve their best on all occasions.

The pupils are a real credit to their parents and carers, and the school community. They have good attitudes to their learning and are excited and enthusiastic. Their behaviour at all times on the playground, moving around the school and in the classroom was exemplary. They are proud of their school and value the efforts of your staff to help them in their studies and development. During my conversation with pupils at lunchtime, they were unanimous in their view that the school community is a happy one, in which they feel safe and secure. You have worked effectively to support the pupils in achieving good attendance which is in line with the national average.

The improvements to the curriculum and the teaching of literacy and mathematics have ensured that all pupils have a very positive experience of school. They were very appreciative of the curriculum you provide and the numerous enrichment and additional activities. These included a whole range of educational visits and sporting activities, as well as singing as part of a choir. Pupils say they are proud to represent their school as a member of the football or basketball team. They also benefit from learning about other faiths and cultures. For example, in this school year, Year 4 pupils have had the opportunity to learn about Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism.

The school is at the heart of the community which it serves. At the start of the day, I spoke to a number of parents who were dropping their children off at the Nursery and Reception classes. They enjoyed the opportunity to stay and support their children in activities and talk to staff. There were 18 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also looked at your own questionnaires, which were very positive about the leadership of the school. Parents spoken to at the beginning of the inspection are very appreciative of the kind and caring way in which you support all within the school community. As a parent of a child who had only recently arrived in the school community said: 'We have been really welcomed and my child loves coming to school every day.'

You have worked hard to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. At the last inspection, you were asked to improve the quality of teaching so that standards of attainment and the rates of progress that all pupils make in their learning are good, by ensuring that work set is challenging enough to extend the capabilities of all pupils, including the most able. During our visits to classrooms, we saw good teaching and learning. In all classrooms, pupils were actively engaged and there were good relationships between the teachers and the pupils. During the morning, we saw a range of lessons, including English and mathematics. In these lessons, teachers provided stimulating learning experiences and were clear in their expectations of what they wanted the pupils to achieve. Oracy was a fundamental aspect of all lessons. For example, Year 4 pupils made good progress in estimating perimeter and area. This was enhanced by the teacher, who challenged pupils to explain clearly the meaning of the terms. In a grammar lesson, Year 6 pupils were challenged to identify correct sentence structure. They

gave precise and sophisticated explanations of the use of clauses to make sentences more interesting.

Teachers work hard to ensure that all groups of learners make progress. Some of the most able pupils make good progress in lessons. There is evidence in their books that shows that this group of learners is capable of working at above the expected standard for their age. However, this is not the case in all classes for all the most able pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other members of staff demonstrate a strong commitment to pupils' safety and welfare. Recruitment procedures are extremely well managed and there are thorough checks on the suitability of staff, governors and volunteers before they are appointed. The arrangements for training are good and the school is well informed about local issues.

Staff know pupils and their families well. They offer support through individual help and group workshops. They work effectively with other agencies when this is important. They are tenacious in following things through to make sure that pupils are safe. Staff know how to respond if they are concerned.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school. Those parents who responded on Parent View and staff who completed the staff survey wholeheartedly agree. Pupils welcome the opportunities to talk about their concerns. They say that bullying is rare and feel that adults will deal with any issues that arise.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed our key lines of enquiry. I have already written about how well you have addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. I have also commented on how effectively you manage safeguarding.
- The first line of inquiry was to look at the actions that leaders have taken to improve provision and pupils' outcomes at key stage 1. During our visit to classrooms, and in looking at books together, it was very evident that this key stage has improved since the last inspection. Pupils make progress throughout key stage 1.
- An increasing number of pupils are now working at the expected standard for their age. This is particularly the case in reading and writing. Building on the work carried out in the early years, staff are very skilled in supporting pupils in developing good letter formation and in writing accurate and complete sentences. Phonics is a strength and links well with early reading and spelling. Using the story of 'The Rainbow Fish' as a stimulus, Year 2 pupils developed some good vocabulary that they would use in their next lesson to write their own version of the story.
- The importance of language is emphasised and developed in mathematics.

Evidence in books shows that the pupils are challenged to use correct mathematical language. In lessons, pupils have the opportunity to engage in practical activities that allow them to understand basic mathematical concepts and apply their learning in solving practical problems.

- A further line of enquiry focused on the quality of provision to ensure high standards of writing. At key stage 1, pupils are challenged to ensure that they form letters correctly, develop a good understanding of sentence construction and write purposefully.
- Pupils build on this at key stage 2. During the inspection, we saw a very stimulating lesson in which Year 5 pupils produced some high-quality descriptive writing linked to their history topic on the dissolution of the monasteries.
- You have identified a small number of pupils in each class that you are supporting effectively to improve their basic spelling, grammar and punctuation. Teachers provide these pupils with additional activities. This support is proving effective, with an increasing number working at the standard appropriate for their age.
- Writing is an area of the curriculum that pupils enjoy and they are rightly proud of their work. They always present their work to the best of their ability and are making at least good progress.
- The final line of enquiry was to look at the quality of the curriculum for the pupils. Evidence in books and the high-quality displays around the school show that pupils enjoy a rich and varied experience. When I spoke to staff and pupils during the inspection, they were unanimous in their appreciation of the many educational visits and visitors to the school that provide a stimulus for their topics. They spoke with enthusiasm of their recent visit to an air-raid shelter as part of their World War II studies. Year 3 pupils were looking forward to visiting Blackpool Zoo in preparation for their topic on predators.
- Pupils have good opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in science, geography and history. As in English and mathematics, the development of appropriate vocabulary is a key aspect of learning in these subjects.
- Writing, particularly in history and religious education, is a very positive feature. There are good examples at all key stages in which pupils get the opportunity to write in detail. This includes writing descriptive pieces and factual information.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all the most able pupils are challenged to work at above the expected standard for their age and achieve what they are capable of.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Morley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you and I observed English and mathematics lessons together in every year group, including phonics lessons in Year 1. Pupils' work in all year groups and in all subjects was scrutinised alongside senior leaders.

Meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the English subject leaders, the office manager and the special educational needs and/or disabilities leader. I also met with two governors and a representative of the local authority.

Documents were evaluated, including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation document, monitoring records and minutes of governors' meetings. I met with a focus group of pupils. Safeguarding documents were reviewed. The 18 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View, were also considered along with comments made personally to me by several parents when bringing their children to school at the start of the day.