

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ken Heaton
Florence Melly Community Primary School
Bushey Road
Liverpool
Merseyside
L4 9UA

Dear Mr Heaton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Florence Melly Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 21 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in February 2017, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- embed current initiatives to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection so that improvements in these areas accelerate
- embed the newly-introduced assessment system in the early years and improve the outdoor provision.

Evidence

During the inspection I met with you, other school leaders, subject leaders, three governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2 and I spoke with

others during breaktimes. I also toured the school with you to observe teaching and learning. I scrutinised pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their work. The school improvement plan and self-evaluation document were evaluated. I looked at a range of documents relating to pupils' progress and attendance. I also considered the school's procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work at the school and records of these checks on the single central record. You made available the findings of the reviews of governance and minutes of governing body meetings. I met with parents before school and considered 35 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Context

Since the last inspection, you have appointed an assistant headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher. These appointments have strengthened leadership capacity. You have also appointed a lead practitioner for teaching and learning and a new business manager. One new governor has been appointed to increase the expertise of the governing body. Two teachers and two teaching assistants left the school last year and were replaced. You have changed staffing and appointed a new leader in key stage 1. You have increased staffing in Year 6 and in the early years.

Main findings

The school has responded positively to the findings of the previous inspection. You have a clear vision for the school and have shown determination in developing the school further. The school's new motto, 'If you can dream it you can do it', and new values system of 'determination, resilience, empowerment, appreciation, motivation and safety' underpin the work of the school. You are well supported by your senior leadership team and governors. You have developed a strong sense of teamwork among staff. Staff support each other well and morale in the school is high.

You have worked with leaders and governors to develop a plan to address the weaknesses that were identified at the last inspection. The plans for improvement contain clear criteria for measuring impact along with appropriate timescales. As a result, senior leaders and governors are able to check the impact of the school's work. You understand that the pace of improvement now needs to accelerate.

You agreed that while strategies are not yet completely embedded, there are signs that they are having an impact. For example, in 2017, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the national phonics screening check improved substantially compared to 2016 and is closer to the national average. Attainment and progress in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was much improved in 2017. The unvalidated overall progress score for mathematics at the end key stage 2 was high in 2017. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading and writing at the end key stage 2 matched the national average in 2017. The unvalidated overall score for reading and writing at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was broadly average. In reading, writing and mathematics the proportion of pupils

reaching greater depth at key stage 1 in 2017 was lower than that seen nationally but is improving. However, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 dipped compared to the previous year. You have responded to this by appointing a new lead for key stage 1 and changed staff to strengthen teaching. Current assessment data shows that more pupils are on track to achieve expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1.

The acting deputy headteacher has improved the assessment system across subjects to track the progress of all groups of pupils more effectively. Pupils' assessments are checked with staff from other schools to ensure accuracy. You have recently formed an 'achievement team' of senior and middle leaders to drive forward school improvement. Pupils' progress is now monitored more carefully at half-termly meetings. The assistant headteacher closely tracks the progress of disadvantaged pupils and ensures that interventions are put in place. However, you acknowledge that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is variable across the school. You have introduced a weekly 'intervention provision plan' which helps to address gaps in learning for all pupils.

You and your governors recognise that providing consistently high-quality teaching to maximise the achievement of all pupils is a continuing priority for the school. The assistant headteacher together with an outside consultant is developing the skills of subject leaders well in checking the quality of teaching and learning in their areas. Subject leaders report that they are now more confident in their roles and are held accountable for their actions. The lead practitioner is working alongside other teachers, providing good support and challenge, in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

Most teachers plan effectively for the wide range of pupils' abilities. Pupils are responding well to the higher expectations that teachers now have of them. Inspection evidence shows that most pupils are being challenged to work at greater depth. However, you acknowledge that the most able pupils need to be challenged more. Pupils are given more opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects including science, history and geography. However, leaders acknowledge that there is further work to do here. Pupils work is neat and well presented.

You recognise that the provision within the early years is not good enough. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development improved in 2017 but remained below the national average. Staff are starting to bring about effective changes following advice and support from a local authority adviser and staff from a local teaching school alliance. Children are given more opportunities to practise their skills of speech, language and communication through a range of experiences. Children have a wider range of activities which develop their resilience. However, you are aware that the newly introduced assessment system to track progress needs to be embedded and that the outdoor learning area is not well developed.

Governors want the best for the school. One commented: 'We want children to have no limits to what their ambitions are.' Governors have created an action plan to ensure that their work becomes more effective. Governors now challenge and support leaders more effectively. A 'challenge board' of governors is beginning to ask more probing questions of senior and middle leaders. Governors have a deeper understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have also received training on school data and safeguarding, which they found useful.

Pupils' attendance is improving and is now just below the national average. Leaders and the attendance officer monitor pupils' absence carefully and work closely with pupils and their families to encourage better attendance. Rewards such as tickets to football matches also help to promote good attendance. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has declined and is closer to the national average.

Parents and pupils say they have noticed improvements that have been made in the school recently. A typical comment from a parent was, 'The safety of children has improved and my children get more challenging homework.' Pupils say that they now receive guided reading sessions using quality texts and rewards for well-presented work. All the pupils I spoke with were proud of their school and feel safe. A typical comment from pupils was: 'Teachers are really nice and make lessons fun.'

External support

The local authority has provided regular, well-structured support and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders have secured additional funding to support improvement to the quality of teaching and learning. A consultant is working alongside leaders to improve the systems for scrutinising pupils' work and observing teaching. Leaders have recently developed useful links with the Warrington Teaching School Alliance, through which teachers in the early years are accessing training and opportunities to observe best practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Marikar
Her Majesty's Inspector