

19 September 2018

Mrs Karen Forrest
Headteacher
Asterdale Primary School
Borrowash Road
Spondon
Derby
Derbyshire
DE21 7PH

Dear Mrs Forrest

Short inspection of Asterdale Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 2018, 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 October 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since your appointment, a new school has been built and the former building demolished. You and other leaders successfully managed the challenges this major project posed. Pupils' progress and attainment have consistently been above the national averages. When pupils leave Asterdale, they are well prepared for their secondary schools.

You have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and what needs to be done to improve it further. You, and your leadership team, use this understanding to plan for improvements. You are well supported by the governing body. Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance. Regular visits to the school and helpful training enable them to provide appropriate support and challenge to you and other leaders.

The great majority of your staff are long-serving. They are all proud to work at the school and keen to play their part in its continuing improvement. Together, your leadership and their commitment have ensured that the school has continued to improve. Improvements include:

- raising pupils' progress and attainment in reading and mathematics
- providing more effective support for pupils with complex needs

- transforming the quality of provision in computing
- increasing the numbers of pupils, from all groups, who enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular activities
- providing high-quality outdoor education, including 'forest school', to benefit pupils' physical and personal development.

Pupils enjoy school. They are keen to share their work. They say that teachers and teaching assistants are always ready to help them if they need some extra support. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is respectful and considerate. Groups such as the school council and the eco council ensure that pupils can contribute to the life of the school and the local community. Carefully selected educational visits, including an annual visit to Parliament, give pupils a good understanding of British values such as democracy, the rule of law and tolerance.

Parents I spoke with were full of praise for your school. Time and again they used the term 'family' to express the quality of the relationships between the pupils, staff and parents and carers. The school is clearly at the heart of its local community.

When the school was last inspected, leaders were asked to improve pupils' achievement in writing. You have had some success. Pupils are now making better progress in writing compared to the national average. However, pupils' progress in writing is weaker than it is in reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who reach greater depth in writing is also lower than it is in the other subjects. Improving still further pupils' progress and attainment in writing is a next step for the school.

You are keen to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum. Subject leaders now play a more significant part in driving improvements in their subjects. However, the content and the sequencing of the curriculum are not always carefully considered. Similarly, it is not always clear exactly what pupils are expected to learn and remember from the topics they study. Addressing these issues, and so improving the impact of the curriculum, is another next step.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There are four designated safeguarding leads in the school. These ensure that any concerns about a pupil's well-being are immediately looked into. They record their safeguarding work carefully. They store pupils' records securely. Parents and pupils value the care that staff take to keep pupils safe.

Staff are alert to any signs that pupils may be at risk of harm, including having mental health problems. There are effective links with local agencies to ensure that any vulnerable pupils receive quick and appropriate support.

Pupils are confident that the adults in the school will always help them if they are anxious about issues at school or outside of school. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. The curriculum, particularly through its personal, social and health education

programme, provides valuable information for pupils on how to keep themselves safe and healthy. This important work is supported by visits to the school from experts in online safety, transport police and representatives from groups such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Staff and governors receive regular safeguarding training. They are up to date in their knowledge and understanding.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' progress in reading is consistently above the national average. Factors contributing to this positive record include:
 - teachers' ability to explain clearly how writers use words, grammar and punctuation to interest and affect the reader
 - pupils' readiness to read regularly and widely
 - the attractive, well-stocked library
 - the willingness of staff to work with colleagues at other schools to share and improve their practice.
- In the past, pupils' scores in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 were below the national average. To address this, the lead teacher for phonics and other staff took part in a project to raise the quality of phonics teaching. This project provided high-quality training for staff and opportunities to work alongside colleagues in other schools. Teachers and teaching assistants are now much more confident and effective when teaching phonics. The lead teacher checks carefully that practice is consistently good. She provides helpful ideas and guidance. The positive impact of the training, and the new approaches to teaching phonics, helped Year 1 pupils to master phonic skills much more successfully in 2018.
- Leaders are keen to improve pupils' writing skills. Actions to improve the quality of handwriting and the pupils' grasp of grammar, punctuation and spelling have been successful. However, despite this knowledge, pupils are not consistently fluent and effective writers. The subject leader has researched teaching approaches that lead to high-quality writing. This has included meeting colleagues from other schools where writing outcomes are high. From the start of this term, teachers are implementing a new policy for teaching writing. This places a greater focus on pupils' speaking and reading skills to improve writing. Senior leaders and the subject leader have clear plans for monitoring and evaluating its impact.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics. Teaching gives high priority to pupils gaining quick recall of number facts, including the multiplication tables. Pupils practise these areas frequently. They are able to recall and use their knowledge to tackle challenging problems. These often require them to use their reasoning skills. The subject leader is keen that mathematics remains a strength of the school. She has helpful support from a local mathematics hub. This enables her to gain new ideas about effective teaching methods and helpful resources. In this

way, the quality of teaching and learning in the subject continues to improve.

- When children start the school at Asterdale, many have weak speaking skills. To improve these skills, staff take every opportunity to model good spoken English. The great majority of pupils gain a wide vocabulary and pronounce words accurately and clearly. They become confident speakers and listeners. They chat happily with one another, and staff, about their work and play. There is effective additional teaching for pupils who are reluctant to talk or who show signs of developmental delay. Pupils consistently make good progress in the development of their speaking skills.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- high-quality teaching enables greater proportions of pupils to attain and exceed the expected standard in writing
- the curriculum, in all subjects, is designed and taught to enable pupils to gain the knowledge and understanding you want them to acquire.

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

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the two assistant headteachers and other members of staff to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also had a discussion with two members of the governing body. I met with a group of older pupils to find out about their views of the school. I talked with other pupils as I met them around the school and in lessons. I observed teaching and learning throughout the school. I looked at work in pupils' books and heard three pupils read.

I considered numerous documents, including those linked to keeping pupils safe, the school's self-evaluation document and the school's improvement plan. I took account of the 11 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and nine written comments from parents, and gathered the views of parents as they brought their children to school. I also considered the views of 15 members of staff who completed their online questionnaires.