

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



25 January 2018

Mrs Claire Smith
Interim Executive Headteacher
Victoria Dock Primary School
South Bridge Road
Victoria Dock
Hull
HU9 1TL

Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Victoria Dock Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 January 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 February 2013.

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 as interim headteacher in September 2017, you have continued to build on the good work started by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who are currently on maternity leave. You demonstrate ambition for all pupils in the school and rightly identify that, with their positive starting points, pupils at Victoria Dock need very clear direction and support to enable them to make the best possible progress and reach high standards across the curriculum.

Since the last inspection, the school has been through considerable change. There have been changes in school leadership, governance and staffing, as well as some fluctuation in standards. In the last two years, leaders have re-established a clear vision for the school and, supported by the local authority and partners within a multi-academy trust, they have identified and prioritised areas for improvement effectively. The appointment of a skilled and personable assistant headteacher, with good subject knowledge and a focused approach to school improvement, has added to the school's capacity to improve. The school is now moving forward with a sense of purpose and determination.

The outward-looking approach from senior leaders has enabled strong partnerships to be formed with other schools in the supporting multi-academy trust and beyond. Staff speak confidently about the excellent opportunities they have to see good practice in other schools and how they are well supported by specialist leaders in

education in their own school. The support and clear direction leaders give to staff have created a positive, ambitious culture where staff feel listened to and valued.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to increase pupils' progress and attainment in reading. In particular, inspectors asked leaders to provide more opportunities for pupils to read aloud and make judgements about the meaning of what they read, and to make careful checks on the fluency and accuracy of pupils' reading. Leaders have created a positive culture around reading. Strong subject leadership has identified where support is most needed, for example in developing pupils' language.

Feedback from key stage 2 pupils about the books they read and the opportunities they have to share books is overwhelmingly positive. Leaders have restructured the way pupils in key stage 2 read by selecting high-quality texts for the whole class to work on together. These texts are linked to the topic. Pupils regularly read aloud in class and are given clear direction in improving their fluency and accuracy. Pupils display a good understanding of language and apply their skills well to their own writing. Where pupils find reading tricky, this is accurately identified by teachers and appropriate support is put in place. Teachers provide plentiful opportunities for pupils to explore and discuss the authors' intentions and make deductions from texts. As a result, a higher-than-national-average proportion of pupils reach the expected standard in reading.

The last inspection also identified that improvements needed to be made in the early years by providing greater opportunities for children to learn through outdoor play. The lead teacher for early years has been well supported through work with other schools and specialists, as well as senior leaders, in carrying out this task effectively. Leaders and staff have been focused on carefully developing the provision, indoors and outdoors, so that pupils of all abilities can take the next steps in their learning across the curriculum. Adults model new activities well, so that children can access these successfully, independently and alongside their peers. For example, during my visit, children showed sustained concentration and care while independently creating symmetrical pictures. They selected their own paint tubes, carefully applied the paint down the middle of the paper, folded it, opened it and decorated their picture with foam shapes, while talking about their work with their friends. Other children took part, inside and outdoors, in engaging activities based on the story *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. They had opportunities to test out their writing and mathematical skills, as well as recreating the story through role play and exploring how to make the best raft to transport the billy goats across the river.

Safeguarding is effective.

Over the last two years, school leaders and governors have improved a number of policies and practices in relation to safeguarding. They have worked hard to make sure that there is a better understanding of effective safeguarding practices among the school community and an understanding that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff members receive regular safeguarding training and updates. Leaders have made substantial improvements to the school site and arrangements for access. As a result, systems and procedures are fit for purpose and understood

well by everyone.

Pupils are taught a wide range of ways to keep safe as soon as they enter early years and throughout school. Every child spoken to during the inspection said that they would speak to an adult in school if they had worries themselves or about another pupil. Pupils talk confidently about different types of bullying, why people may bully others and what to do if they or another pupil is being bullied. However, they say that behaviour in their school is usually very good and that bullying is extremely rare.

Inspection findings

- The governing body has a clear view of the improvements that have taken place over the last couple of years and the positive impact that these have had on pupils' standards. They are not afraid to challenge leaders when performance in any area is less than good. They are eager to work with school leaders to ensure that their aspirations are met and the school ultimately offers an outstanding quality of education. In this journey, governors are constantly revising their own practice so that they are offering strong support and challenge to school leaders, based on clear information they use well from the local authority, external consultants, the trust partners and school senior and middle leaders.
- Standards reached by Year 6 pupils showed considerable improvement in 2016 and 2017, after disappointing results in 2015. A higher-than-national-average proportion of pupils left school with expected and higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017. However, leaders know that they need to make every moment count for every pupil to ensure that the progress pupils make in reading is as strong as their progress in writing and mathematics. Focused direction, ambition, high expectations and clear direction to teachers are resulting in these improvements being realised. Pupils' work in key stage 2 is of high quality as a result of high teacher expectations and pupils' strong attitudes to learning. The content of pupils' work shows clear progression of skills as they move through key stage 2. Leaders have accurately identified that teachers of younger pupils need to give them more precise direction in what they need to practise or do next to improve.
- During the inspection, I wanted to explore how well pupils are supported in developing their early reading skills. Results in the Year 1 phonics screening check dipped significantly in 2016. However, they were back in line with national averages in 2017. Although a new programme has been introduced to deliver phonics teaching, many staff have not been trained in how to deliver this. Therefore, teaching is not always well modelled or systematic. As a result, pupils' confidence in using their phonics knowledge to support their reading and writing is varied. Lower-ability pupils, in particular, are not always well supported to quickly catch up with their peers. Leaders agree that whole-team training and coaching are needed and have plans in place for these to take place this term.
- Noting the recent improved standards in English and mathematics, I was interested to see how well pupils are making progress in other subjects. You and other leaders explained the revisions you have made to the curriculum to ensure

that pupils have opportunities to explore and develop their skills across a wide range of subjects and activities. Middle leadership is improving rapidly and subject leaders are starting to check that clear progression is well planned as pupils move through school. You accurately identify that there needs to be a specific focus on making sure that the most able pupils are fully supported in deepening their understanding across subjects. Pupils are engaged in their topic work. The links that are made across subjects and through English and mathematics help pupils remember information and embed their skills. Most teachers place high importance on encouraging pupils to talk about their learning and give reasons for the choices they make.

- Throughout the inspection, it was clear that changes in staffing and leadership have resulted in uncertainty for some parents and carers. Leaders know that they need to communicate effectively with parents throughout the continued changes taking place. Recently, leaders have started to work more closely with parents of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they have a better understanding of the support their children are receiving.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of phonics improves to support pupils in making more rapid progress in their early reading and writing skills
- teachers give younger pupils more precise direction about what they need to improve to take the next step in their learning across the curriculum
- work to ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding through a wide and engaging curriculum continues, with a particular focus on making sure that higher-ability pupils are sufficiently challenged
- leadership continues to be highly focused through the continuing changes in senior leadership and the movement to becoming part of an academy trust.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Rowley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this one-day inspection, we spent time together with your assistant headteacher in classrooms and looking at the quality of pupils' work. We discussed your evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. We shared this discussion with the primary lead from the trust you are working with, who also provided direct leadership support to the school in 2015 and 2016. We looked at the success of the actions leaders have taken. I held discussions with members of your governing body and had a separate meeting with the local authority school improvement partner. I met with the school business manager and middle leaders. I spoke to pupils about their learning and looked through their work with them. I spoke to parents before school started and took into account the 48 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The responses from staff to the staff survey were also considered. I reviewed a number of school documents, including the written evaluation of the school's work, documents relating to checks on the quality of teaching and learning, school assessment information, a range of policies and safeguarding information.