

Progress in school improvement

Each academic year I share with you our 'parent friendly' version of the school improvement plan for the year, as well as a summary of the improvements from the previous year. In addition to this, I would also like to share with you a summary of progress in school improvement over time. It has been 18 months since our last Ofsted inspection and schools are typically inspected every 3 years. As we are hitting the half way mark, I thought it was an appropriate time to remind you of the key findings from our last Ofsted inspection in May 2015 and inform you of the progress we have made towards the objectives set by Ofsted to further improve our school.

A reminder of what Ofsted said....

This is a good school because...

- Highly effective leadership and management have raised pupils' achievement by ensuring better teaching since the previous inspection, despite substantial changes to staffing.
- Achievement and teaching continue to improve through the clear leadership provided by the headteacher, middle leaders and the effective governing body.
- Progress has been particularly strong in reading and mathematics in the current year because staff have focused on these aspects of pupils' learning.
- Provision in the early years is good and recent changes to the provision enables children to make a good start through interesting activities that help them to learn effectively both in the classroom and outdoors.
- Pupils' good behaviour contributes to the progress that they make. Pupils of different ages get on extremely well together. They enjoy learning as well as the social opportunities that the school provides.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is promoted well. There is a strong emphasis on respect and tolerance that encourages pupils to celebrate difference.
- Pupils feel safe and secure in school. They are well cared for and, as a result, enjoy their time at school. This view is shared by parents.
- Attractive displays of pupils' work in classrooms and corridors create interesting and stimulating places for pupils to work in.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are too few instances of outstanding teaching to make pupils' achievement outstanding.
- Progress in writing, although good, is not as consistently strong as in mathematics; some teachers accept standards of writing that are too low.
- Teachers' written feedback to pupils does not always identify where pupils need more practice in order to deepen their understanding. Occasionally, teachers' questions do not give pupils the chance to explain and fully develop their ideas.
- Not all pupils have developed a fluent style of handwriting and some do not present their work as neatly as they should.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is typically outstanding and further raises pupils' achievement by ensuring that:
 - teachers always ask questions to deepen and challenge pupils' thinking at their differing levels of ability
 - marking tells pupils more clearly how well they have done and consistently gives them advice on how they can improve their work and that pupils are given sufficient opportunity to respond to teachers' comments.
- Accelerate further progress in writing, particularly for older pupils, by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces of work, and to practise and consolidate the skills learnt in English lessons in other subjects
 - improving pupils' handwriting and presentation skills across the school.

What have we been working on?

Over the last 18 months, our school improvement plans have focussed on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

- Some of the teaching and learning is now outstanding over time.
- We have had significant staff training on developing effective questioning, specifically higher order questioning. Teachers and teaching assistants questioning of pupils is at a higher level than it previously was. In addition to this, we are developing pupil's ability to question to enhance their learning. It has become a whole school policy and is embedded throughout.
- We have introduced critical thinking and philosophy for children into the curriculum to deepen pupils thinking.
- All pupils are challenged appropriately through the increase of open ended and problem solving tasks in Maths. Reasoning in Maths has been a priority.
- We have worked hard on developing a 'mastery' scheme of work that is able to challenge all pupils, regardless of their ability.
- We have invested in peer mentoring and review with other teachers and schools within our alliance. This has allowed staff (in a small, often isolated) environment to share best practice and develop skills.
- Mrs Mitchell's teaching commitment has been used to team teach with all members of staff to ensure that the teaching and learning opportunities pupils have, is the very best it can be.
- We have developed the outdoor learning provision in Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, to ensure that pupils get rich opportunities to learn through play.
- We have joined a teaching alliance where staff professional development and training is bespoke and brokered to our specific needs.
- We have introduced a new rigorous spelling scheme.
- We have introduced a rigorous handwriting scheme.
- We are doing a lot of work on developing growth mind-set with pupils so that they all have extremely positive attitudes towards learning and high expectations of themselves.
- We have invested in lots of curriculum resources to improve the teaching of writing.
- We have received substantial training on improving the teaching of writing across school.
- Miss Evely has taken on the role of English leader and her commitment and dedication to the role has sharpened the focus across school.
- We have worked hard to develop our marking and feedback policy so that it ensures that pupils know how to improve their learning and make the appropriate next steps in their learning journey. This is work in progress.

What is the impact?

- Improved pupil progress. The majority of pupils across the whole of the school have made better than expected progress since September.
- Improved attainment
- The majority of the pupils across school are working at least at age related expectations.

What are our next steps?

- To ensure that 100% of teaching and learning is outstanding over time.
- To further improve the quality of teaching and learning in writing, developing the teaching of non-fiction.
- To continue training staff to the highest standard to deliver the highest quality of effective questioning.
- To further develop marking and feedback ensuring that self-assessment and peer assessment contributes to pupil progress.

I hope this has made sense to you and keeps you, as key stakeholders in our school, adequately informed and happy with the provision and education we offer your children. If you would like to discuss anything, please come and have a chat. Thank you, Sian Mitchell.

