

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr J Tearle
Headteacher
Mowbray School
Masham Road
Bedale
North Yorkshire
DL8 2SD

Dear Mr Tearle

Short inspection of Mowbray School

Following my visit to the school on 13 December 2017 with George Gilmore HMI, 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with your deputy, you continue to make an effective team, sharing a commitment to help and support pupils and their families. Good opportunities for pupils' personal development and strong relationships between pupils and staff continue to be at the core of the school's work. The vast majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online parent survey were highly complimentary about all aspects of the school. Almost all who responded would recommend the school to others.

This inspection investigated the work of leaders to improve the way they assure the quality of the school's work and the steps they had taken to improve the challenge for pupils and develop independence, particularly for the most able pupils. We found that leaders and governors know what the school does well and where it needs to improve. Since the last inspection, the school has undergone a period of much change. The number of pupils attending the school has increased significantly. The profile of pupils has also changed. Their needs remain diverse, although increasingly many more pupils are now identified as most able. Together with governors, you have expanded facilities and learning resources and have acted to strengthen the school's leadership team. School plans demonstrate a clear agenda for improvement. You have secured additional specialist teaching staff and restructured the way that pupils are taught. You have invested in computer programs in English and mathematics to provide opportunities for pupils to practise

and develop the basic skills they are taught in lessons. These changes to the curriculum and the expansion of GCSE qualifications show that the school is responding to the changing needs of pupils in the primary and secondary phases of the school. However, leaders, managers and governors have yet to find out whether the changes introduced are making a significant and sustained difference to pupils' achievement. The need to further refine systems to evaluate pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour is recognised in the latest school development plan.

At the time of your previous inspection, you were asked to improve achievement in English and also to improve teaching, particularly for the most able pupils. During this inspection, we found much to celebrate in the focused work that has taken place to develop these aspects within the school. Training and professional support have been used effectively to develop and extend teachers' knowledge and understanding of strategies to support pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows a well-planned approach to developing such skills. Pupils are responding enthusiastically to a curriculum which includes more challenging content, particularly in English and mathematics. In discussions with inspectors, pupils said that they enjoyed English, and one Year 9 pupil knowledgeably described their work about adjectives. In art and design, Year 10 pupils demonstrated their improving fluency in reading, taking turns to read aloud the tasks for the morning's lesson.

An area for investigation during this inspection was to consider whether pupils are making good progress from their starting points on entry to the school and especially for the most able pupils. School assessment information shows an improving trend over time in pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. The structured steps and guidance that pupils in the early years receive, and those in Years 10 and 11 who are studying qualifications, are supporting their progress. Some teachers maintained accurate assessment records and used these to identify the next steps in learning. The school reports on pupils who are making expected progress and those who are making faster or slower progress. However, understanding of these expectations is not always clear. Pupils' individual targets do not always identify the next steps that they need to make in order to meet the expectations that teachers have for them.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors give priority to keeping pupils safe. The extensions and improvements made to the buildings since the previous inspection demonstrate the priority they give to pupils' safety and welfare. Comprehensive and up-to-date policies to protect children and keep them safe are known and understood by adults in the school as a result of annual training and regular updates. There is regular staff training on safeguarding and supporting pupils' medical, health and personal care needs. Safer recruitment arrangements currently in place are complete and comply with the requirements expected of all schools.

You make sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school because 'staff help you all the time' and 'staff care for

you'. Pupils know how to keep safe online. They described some of the things they learned from computer lessons and assemblies. Pupils also learn how to stay healthy, make choices and learn how to make friends in personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils said that sometimes there is bullying, but they were confident that staff would keep them safe.

Inspection findings

- Specific targets for pupils' personal and social development are strong. This is because they are focused on individual needs and the next steps to develop key skills and behaviours to support their learning. Some pupils and parents have a key role in setting them in conjunction with teachers. Consequently, pupils and their families know what teachers expect.
- Targets for the most able pupils are also specific in their academic focus. Scrutiny of pupils' books and files shows that the next step that individual pupils need to master to develop their learning in communication, literacy and numeracy is clearly stated. However, this is not so for pupils of all abilities.
- Good teaching has been sustained and strengthened in several subjects. The additional expertise that specialist staff have brought to the school has quickly been used to good effect to extend and deepen the curriculum in all key stages.
- Children make strong progress in the early years. Their starting points are identified clearly and the expectations and next steps in progress are explicit for individual pupils. The early years team demonstrate a strong understanding and consistent approach to assessment and recording of pupils' progress.
- Governors have continued to develop and improve the fabric of the school and use funding wisely to extend facilities. Much has been achieved in this regard in the four years since the previous inspection. For example, the investment in new books is helping to support pupils' interest in and enjoyment of reading.
- Behaviour in lessons and around school is managed consistently well. Pupils like the wide range of rewards and work hard to achieve them. They enjoy the awards and praise assemblies, the prize box and golden tickets.
- A small group of pupils with severe difficulties in managing their emotions and behaviour are responding well to specialist support. The number of days lost to exclusion has begun to decline this term.
- Many pupils are confident, happy and enjoy coming to school. Proactive work with the families and carers of a small number of pupils with complex medical needs is being closely monitored by leaders to help them to access as much education as their conditions will safely allow. Currently, absence rates across the school are slightly higher than the national average.
- Opportunities to develop independence are more extensive than at the previous inspection. Pupils respond exceptionally well to the additional opportunities they have to make decisions, to work with partners and to complete tasks such as taking turns, making a Christmas meal, collecting eggs and looking after animals on the school farm.

- The additional experiences and opportunities that the school provides are valued by parents. For example, one parent explained that teaching real-life skills by using the farm, and other practical courses, helped to make learning meaningful for their child.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they strengthen assessment and target-setting by:

- ensuring that the expectations of academic progress for all pupils in each subject are clear
- establishing a clear understanding of what expected progress means for individual pupils, and identifying what better-than-expected progress means
- using to the full all of the information available to them to determine whether the changes they have introduced are making a significant difference to pupils' achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and senior leaders to discuss leaders' evaluation of the school's work and priorities for improvement. We visited classrooms across the school, including the school farm. We evaluated a sample of work in pupils' books and met with a group of pupils to discuss their learning and their views of the school. We analysed a range of school documentation, including the school's information about current pupils' performance and records relating to historical performance. We met with senior and middle leaders to discuss checks on the quality of teaching, attendance figures and behavioural incidents. We looked at the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures and considered a qualifying complaint. I met with the chair of governors and I also spoke with a representative of North Yorkshire local authority. I considered 47 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, including 37 free-text responses parents also provided. I considered 36 responses to the online staff survey.