

Local Authority Review of Marine Park First School

The Assisted School Review was carried out on 20th and 22nd of November 2012 by four local authority officers at the request of the headteacher. It was carried out in partnership with school staff and governors. Its purpose was to support the headteacher and senior leaders in verifying the school's self evaluation and the improvements made since the new headteacher took up his post.

A total of 24 lessons or parts of lessons were observed during the review, taught by 20 different teachers. This included 3 joint lesson observations with members of the senior leadership team, including the headteacher. Time was also spent observing sessions that teach pupils the letters and the sounds they make (phonics), guided reading and additional support sessions to help pupils catch-up with their classmates. Officers held discussions with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, three groups of pupils, the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) and members of the governing body, including the Chair of Governors. Pupils' work was reviewed and school documentation relating to pupil progress was evaluated alongside the headteacher.

Information about the school

Marine Park First school is much larger than the average-sized school with three classes in each year group. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is below that found nationally at less than half the average figure. Most pupils are of White, British heritage. Of the few pupils from other ethnic backgrounds, none are at the very earliest stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils being supported at school action is below the national figure. The proportion of pupils being supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below that found nationally.

Pupils' achievement

- Pupils achieve well in their time at school
- Exceptionally strong relationships between staff and children and teaching that is often of the highest quality, result in children making good and often outstanding progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage. This has led to consistently above average outcomes by the end of Reception.
- Pupils make at least good progress across Key Stage 1 so that by the end of Year 2, the standards pupils reach in their reading and mathematics are above average. Pupils have made the additional steps in learning necessary for their achievements in writing to now reach above average levels.
- Momentum is continued into Year 3 and 4 where significant proportions of pupils now make above the expected rates of progress in their English. These figures are high when compared with national equivalents. While progress is consistently good in mathematics, it is not yet above the rates expected nationally for all pupils. The school is well aware that the success of its strategies in English now needs to be applied to mathematics.
- Attainment is often well-above the expected levels by the time pupils leave the school.
- Achievement was judged to be at least good in all of 24 lessons or parts of lessons (taught by 20 different teachers) that were observed during the assisted review in the autumn term 2012.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make equally good progress to their peers. Some make outstanding progress in their reading and writing because they receive more additional support sessions outside of their classroom for this subject. Pupils catch-up and keep-up with their classmates as a result.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. The school uses this well to provide additional adult support, including one-to-one tuition and a nurture group, and assist families in sending those pupils to whom it relates on enrichment visits, such as to outdoor education centres. These activities support their increased self-esteem, levels of independence and cooperation with their peers. They also provide motivating contexts about which pupils can write.

The quality of teaching

- The quality of teaching observed within lessons, and over time, is consistently good; an increasing proportion is outstanding. As a result, pupils achieve well and develop highly positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils receive regular and positive feedback on their work. Teachers frequently invest a lot of time in providing the most appropriate 'stars and wishes' for writing or their 'now try this' comments in mathematics. As a result, pupils clearly know what they have done well and where further improvement is needed to be even more successful. The use of "Now try this and challenge activities" in maths and opportunities to address the "wish" in extended writing are giving pupils timely opportunities to address misconceptions and/or the next step in learning.
- Skilled teaching assistants know the pupils in their group well so that they provide the correct level of challenge.
- Teaching is outstanding within the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is because learning is planned that takes precise account of children's individual next steps and their interests. Teachers work highly effectively with their teaching assistants to model effective use of language and build children's curiosity. Every effort is made to integrate all aspects of learning, especially those that are most crucial to development.
- The teaching of reading is a strength of the school. From the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are immersed in a language-rich environment which promotes effective communication. Across the school, highly effective teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) ensures that the vast majority of pupils learn to read quickly and develop a love and appreciation of books. Guided reading sessions have been the focus of much staff training and development. This has been successfully embedded by teachers so that pupils in the older year groups discuss the issues and themes of their texts confidently and develop good skills of comprehension to aid their understanding.

Behaviour and safety

- The behaviour and safety of pupils is outstanding. This allows pupils to focus fully on their learning, make at least good progress and develop exemplary attitudes to all that they experience. Pupils are caring, exceptionally courteous and treat others, whether friends or adults, as they themselves would wish to be treated. Pupils behave impeccably at all times, whether in lessons, around the school or at play. This is because all adults have high expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves and lead by example. The school's system of 'family credits' provides a well-liked method for rewarding positive behaviour. It continually motivates the whole-school to keep to the school rules. It also motivates pupils to remind their classmates of how they should behave at all times, without the need for adult intervention. In this way, pupils show high levels of self-management. The outstanding behaviour and safety of pupils contributes significantly to the friendly, hard-working and respectful atmosphere created within the school. As such, pupils thoroughly enjoy their time and experiences at Marine Park.
- Pupils contribute to the management of their own behaviour so that incidents of poor behaviour are rare.
- The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong because it is included in all aspects of the school's work. This creates a supportive environment where all pupils develop into confident, well-rounded individuals.
- Dedicated time to address social, moral and cultural issues, as well as cover aspects of behaviour and safety, are built into 'family group' time. These sessions are an excellent means of allowing older pupils to become role-models for those who are younger than them. The sessions also provide a specific time for pupils to develop cooperation, team work and respect. In this way, pupils learn to become confident, well-rounded individuals.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of care their children receive and know that they are happy and safe at school.
- Pupils fully believe that bullying is rare and that, should it ever occur, it would be dealt with quickly. They understand the nature of bullying, including that related to different forms of prejudice, and are extremely knowledgeable about the dangers and risks they may encounter, including older pupils' understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet.

Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The dedicated headteacher, well-supported by the senior leadership team, has ensured that improvement since the previous review has been rapid.
- The headteacher has high expectations of what can be achieved by all pupils. The use of Key Stage 2 national transition matrices to determine expected, and exceeding expected, rates of progress for Year 3 and 4 pupils shows the high standards that senior leaders aim for in their work.
- The entire staff team are committed to the school's drive to be even better and readily undertake additional training to improve their practice.
- Governors are committed, experienced in their role and bring a wide range of professional expertise to the school. They regularly challenge the Headteacher and senior leaders to improve further through a strong knowledge of pupil progress data and by asking exceptionally pertinent questions about the use of school funds, including the pupil premium, and the effectiveness of chosen strategies or resources. They regularly appreciate the quality of teaching within school through planned visits to support classroom activities or whole school events.
- School systems to check on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make are rigorous. This has supported the headteacher and senior leaders to know what has worked well and what needs further improvement, leading to a rapidly improving quality of teaching across the school and standards of work in writing that have now reached above average levels. On this basis, the school has an outstanding capacity to make further improvements.
- The headteacher, ably supported by the assistant headteachers, keeps a close eye on the progress pupils make each term and across the year. This includes those pupils who are potentially vulnerable to underachieve, such as pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or those from other ethnic backgrounds who are learning English as an additional language. Senior leaders check on the quality of teaching to find ways of making their work even better. This is through looking at the progress pupils have made each term, the standards of work in pupils' books and by regularly 'dropping-in' to teachers' classrooms.
- The school's curriculum has strengths in the range of visits and visitors that are planned to engage pupils and strengthen their learning. The essential skills of reading, writing, communication and mathematics are well-taught from the very beginnings of Nursery and continue throughout each key stage.
- Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and there are few variations in the achievement of different groups of pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding so that pupils make even greater progress, particularly in their mathematics, by:

- planning lessons that always fully challenge those pupils who are more-able
- ensuring that pupils have frequent opportunities to talk and discuss their work so that ideas can be shared and extended
- building time into mathematics lessons and across other subjects for pupils to use their mathematical skills in different contexts
- developing more innovative and creative teaching strategies that fully inspire and excite all pupils
- giving pupils more regular opportunities to return to their teacher's comments about their work and make the necessary changes for more rapid progress.

Adapt the successful approaches used to enable all pupil groups to achieve well in English to mathematics, including the development of more targeted, additional support for those pupils who struggle with the subject.