



Meeting for Parents and Carers following Ofsted – Thurs 2nd March and Tues 7th March 2017

SIAMS Inspection – December 2016

The school was judged overall to be within the category of 'Good' (2).

The report stated:

“The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good. All members of the school community recognise that, although the headteacher has been in post for less than a year, the impact of her vision on the development of the school’s Christian character has already been and continues to be extensive.

Governors have worked hard, reviewing and analysing their work to ensure that they provide appropriate challenge and support. Staff value the strengthened support and training provided. They work together very well, united in the knowledge that their work is valued. The headteacher and governors have met some challenging issues with purpose, as they are determined that outcomes for all pupils must improve. They recognise that standards of attainment and rates of pupil progress are not yet consistently good.

Significant changes in the curriculum and improved teaching and learning are having a positive influence on pupil progress and achievement, but as many initiatives are recent, the impact on standards is not yet consistent.

Governors support and resource the leadership of collective worship and RE effectively. They monitor and evaluate the work of the school with increasing rigour. They ensure that the needs of all pupils are met through the effective use of additional funding and human resources. Issues from the previous inspection have been addressed, but as the changes made are very recent, their impact is yet to be evaluated.”

Ofsted Inspection – January 2017

The school was judged overall to be within the category of 'Inadequate' (4).

This result is obviously very disappointing for all members of staff and governors, and also for you as parents and carers. To a certain extent, this outcome was not a surprise, given the turbulent and unsettled few years the school experienced before the arrival of the new headteacher. It must be said, however, that the school continues to be firmly committed to providing the best education possible for the children of Astbury St Mary’s.

Focusing on the Positives ...

Ofsted said:

“The effectiveness of early year’s provision is ‘good’ due to the strong leadership in the early years, which has driven this area of the school.”

“There have been steady improvements in children’s achievements since the last inspection (Early Years). The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has improved over the last three years to rise above the national average. Children are well prepared for Year 1.”

“The new headteacher prioritised safeguarding. There are clear and effective procedures in place to ensure that pupils are safe.”

“Pupils are confident and open and are starting to understand what it means to be a successful learner through the school’s recent work on adopting positive attitudes towards their work.”

“Pupils discussed their learning about other cultures and faiths with enthusiasm and showed a mature attitude towards equality issues.”

Ofsted asked parents ***“Would you recommend this school to another parent?”*** 90% of you said ***“Yes.”***

Ofsted asked parents ***“Is my child happy at this school?”*** 92% of you agreed.

Our response to Ofsted Comments ...

Ofsted said: ***“The school’s self-evaluation is overgenerous. Leaders and governors do not analyse the weaknesses of the school well enough to set clear targets for future improvement.”***

However:

Prior to the Ofsted report, a Raising Attainment Group (RAG) was set up targeting key areas for rapid development in the school. More rigorous and clearly set out action plans have been put in place (including short, medium and long term goal setting).

Improvement plans have been implemented and reviews centred around achievement / outcomes for pupils.

Growth mindset has been introduced to improve pupils’ resilience and enjoyment in learning and to create intrinsic motivation for learning.

Clearer targets are being developed, prioritising Writing, Mathematics, Quality of Teaching and Behaviour for Learning.

The headteacher and chair of governors have fortnightly meetings to discuss the latest issues in the school.

Since January 2016 – Establishment of the school management team (Miss Irwin, Mr Robinson and Mrs Worswick). Weekly meetings analyse school weaknesses and work towards school improvement.

Since January 2017 – Middle leaders (subject leaders) have worked with the headteacher at Brereton to write action plans in English and maths, setting clear targets.

Ofsted said: ***“Governors have not fulfilled their legal responsibility to follow the statutory national curriculum, which is only now being introduced”.***

In September 2014 work began on implementing the new national curriculum, but it was not embedded into lessons by previous leadership and there was no training for staff. In Sept 2015 the school was dealing with the legacy of previous leadership problems. As it was without a full-time headteacher and with a part-time interim head, key subject leaders had to spend time out of the classroom performing leadership roles.

However:

January 2016 – Upon the appointment of Mrs Worswick, subject leaders were able to spend more time back in the classroom and concentrate on implementation of the new curriculum.

March 2016 – A Review of Governance was conducted following the Diocese review. All recommendations were actioned, and new policies and procedures were put in place, including those for governor visits to the school.

November 2016 – Governors made a formal visit to monitor the effectiveness of the school improvement plan, prioritising writing and behaviour, and the development of growth mindset. They provided feedback on the day and completed evaluations which were fed back to the headteacher and the Diocese.

Ofsted said: ***“Leaders have not improved the quality of teaching and learning.”***

However:

Prior to Ofsted, all teaching staff had been sharing experiences of best practice with each other and with external colleagues in an informal partnership arrangement. The school continually looks for partnership opportunities with other schools and it is part of the Congleton Education Community Partnership (CECP) which gives us access to their services. This includes training for staff and subject leader development to improve teaching and learning.

As part of the RAG, training for teachers has been set as a high priority so that overall attainment for pupils can be raised rapidly.

The headteacher monitors planning weekly and conducts learning walks, giving regular feedback to staff on how to improve teaching and learning. Staff take the feedback on board and make changes to future planning and lessons. Since Ofsted, planning has been seen by the headteacher before the start of a week as well as at the end, when ongoing assessments and changes to meet children’s individual needs have been applied.

Performance management targets of teachers and the headteacher are now clearly linked to improve teaching and learning.

Ofsted said: ***“Governors have shown poor judgement, for example in their commissioning of external companies who have provided inaccurate assessments of school performance, only for governors to recommission them to provide further services to the school”.***

However:

Governors had raised concerns regarding the previous school improvement partner. The company, ECM, was challenged and advice was taken from other users of this service. It was decided to continue with ECM, but with the appointment of a new school improvement partner who had recent experience as a headteacher in an outstanding school, and who is a current Ofsted inspector.

The school is already supported and visited termly by Fiona Burke- Jackson from the Local Authority and Brian Padgett (a former Ofsted inspector) from the Diocese.

Ofsted said: ***“Governors are committed to the school but they have not sufficiently challenged school leaders.”***

Governors found it difficult to challenge leadership during committee meetings as minutes and actions were not reported timely enough for the governors to have an impact. Previous leadership problems meant that they did not receive important information.

However:

A new Cheshire East clerk was allocated in Summer 2016. This has greatly improved the service to the governors who now have the required time to evaluate data and challenge leadership during committee meetings.

Training / skills audits of Governors have revealed areas of development and gaps in the overall skill set, which are in the process of being filled.

Governors have been set targets for training, to enable them to challenge more effectively and to make a stronger impact.

Headteacher performance management meetings are now held every two months.

Moving Forward ...

All schools can make improvements and we are no exception. The first major step towards school improvement was the appointment of our new head in 2015. The governing board knew that an experienced headteacher was needed, who would be able to improve standards in teaching and learning, safeguarding, special educational needs provision, and behaviour. Mrs Worswick has proven experience of managing and leading a successful local school and her hard work and passion for our school is evident every day. Since her appointment we have continued to put necessary actions in place, and support from the Diocese, our school improvement partner and the Local Authority has been gathering momentum since 2016. The achievement of our pupils remains a top priority.

The school's development plan for 2016 prioritised behaviour and the use of growth mindset. This means that most children are now in a better position to optimise their learning, and to develop their full potential as rapidly as possible. This remains a priority for 2017. Leadership and governors have a clearer understanding of the time required to realise this change of culture within the school.

The implementation of refocussed improvement plans and the provision of external support will continue to enable us to make the necessary changes to rapidly improve our school. We aim to achieve an inspection report which is at least good when we are next inspected.

We at Astbury St Mary's, cherish our family school values and encourage parents and carers to be involved in their child's education. We will provide regular progress reports, e.g. from the RAG. (We are continually developing our communications and any feedback on the best method of communicating information will be gratefully received.)

Formal discussions regarding academy status are underway and it is likely that Astbury St Mary's will join an academy trust in the future.

Finally ...

We will continue to give our children high-quality education, guidance and support, in a caring, Christian environment. This will enable them to grow into confident young people who will succeed in life.

Merekats statement

Astbury Merekats Out Of School Club is a private company and run independently from the school. We provide wrap around care for Astbury St Mary's and other local schools. We were separately inspected by Ofsted in November 2016 and were rated 'Good' in all areas.

The school's recent Ofsted inspection was obviously disappointing, but we would like to reassure parents that we will continue to maintain a strong partnership with the school and parents during these challenging times.

Coasting Schools Letter - Regional School Commissioner January 2017

Once a school has fallen within the coasting definition, the Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) acting on behalf of the Secretary of State will engage with the school to consider its wider context, and decide whether additional support is needed to help current leaders improve the school.