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Mr Peter Hopkins
Headteacher
Severne Junior Infant and Nursery School
Severne Road
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Dear Mr Hopkins

Short inspection of Severne Junior Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 15 September 2016, 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 your school was judged to be good in March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You, your deputy headteacher and your leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The warm welcome for children starting school lives up to the school's values of providing a thriving and happy ethos where every child is valued equally and cared for. As a result, children get off to a rapid start during their first years in school.

Although pupils join at very low starting points, they do especially well in their reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 so that they are well prepared to face the challenges of key stage 2. As pupils join Year 3 they continue to make rapid progress.

As a result of good teaching:

- by the time they leave at the end of Year 6 pupils have caught up with their peers nationally as they move on to secondary school
- children in the early years make rapid progress from their very low starting points
- pupils do very well in the phonics screening check in Year 1 and by the end of Year 2 almost all have reached the expected standard for their age
- standards are above average in mathematics and well above in reading and writing by the end of key stage 1

- pupils have made good progress in key stage 2 especially in writing and mathematics
- disadvantaged pupils have done particularly well in their writing by the end of key stage 2.

Pupils spoken to feel overwhelmingly safe in school. They particularly like the butterfly room where they can go if they are worried or concerned about anything. They have every confidence in their school leaders that if they report an incident it will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example on computers through safety lessons and on the road through Bikeability courses.

Your leadership was commended in the previous inspection for having a clear vision for the school based on high aspirations shared by all staff. You have continued this strength by distributing leadership responsibilities throughout the team.

Inspectors observed at the last inspection that the school needed to raise teachers' expectations of what the highest attaining pupils could achieve and to raise attendance levels. In the 2015 tests, the proportion of pupils who achieved the highest possible levels in mathematics, reading and writing combined was close to the national average. A higher proportion of pupils than nationally gained a Level 6 in mathematics and at least a Level 5 in the English, grammar, punctuation and spelling test.

Attendance has improved rapidly since 2013 when it was well below the national average. It is still below average but you have reduced the difference significantly both for overall absence and persistent absence.

Your own accurate evaluation of the school acknowledges that the school is not yet outstanding. Outcomes for pupils in reading by the end of Year 6 are not as strong as they are in mathematics and writing, including those for disadvantaged pupils. The monitoring of additional activities and support outside the classroom for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not as strong as it is for teaching and support in classes. The pupil premium strategy does not yet set out in enough detail how the impact of additional activities for disadvantaged pupils will be evaluated.

Safeguarding is effective.

The shared leadership team ensures that all senior leaders play a key role in promoting a culture of safeguarding. All staff are trained regularly and kept up to date with the latest guidance and policy. Referrals are conducted efficiently and the school works well with other agencies to ensure the safety of all its pupils.

Governors too are acutely aware of their role to hold leaders to account and make regular checks to ensure that leaders are meeting legal requirements. In addition to procedural checks, they talk regularly to staff, pupils and parents to determine that safeguarding runs through all aspects of school life and that everyone in school has

a duty to be vigilant. Those with specific safeguarding responsibility are well trained for their role.

Inspection findings

- You have continued to strengthen leadership at all levels by enhancing the senior leadership team and developing a more shared leadership team for middle leaders. Leaders challenge teachers to set high expectations for pupils so that they can do as well as they can from their low starting points.
- Outcomes have continued to improve for pupils in both key stages 1 and 2 over the last five years, building on the successful start pupils get off to in the early years.
- In the most recent unvalidated tests, pupils have done especially well in writing and mathematics. Pupils currently in school are also achieving well in these subjects.
- Over recent years, the progress of disadvantaged pupils from key stage 1 to 2 has been above that of other pupils nationally, despite a small dip in 2015 in mathematics. Their progress in reading was in line with that of other pupils nationally and they exceeded expected progress in writing. Work seen in their books indicates that disadvantaged pupils currently in school are progressing well.
- Children are well prepared for the start of key stage 1 by the time they leave the early years. Their rich language experience ensures that they are above levels typical for their age by the end of Reception. During the inspection visit some children were experiencing their very first day in school and were already settling well. Parents spoken to were delighted with the provision and support their children receive and the way they are warmly welcomed into the classroom by staff to make them and their children feel at ease. Staff use their bilingual skills effectively to communicate with parents who do not speak English fluently.
- Pupils exceed the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1 and almost all pupils are ready for key stage 2 by the end of Year 2. Pupils in the early years and key stage 1 are taught phonics very well. From an early age pupils are comfortable using and understanding phrases such as 'split diagraph'. Standards overall at the end of key stage 1 are high compared with the national average.
- Progress continues to be strong for those pupils in key stage 2. The high level of pupil mobility means that overall standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6, although there is a rising trend over time.
- Pupils for whom English is an additional language are making particularly good progress from their low starting points where many are new to English. By the end of Year 6, they have exceeded the attainment of all pupils nationally in mathematics and writing.

- Although they can read with fluency, some pupils learning English as an additional language and the most able disadvantaged pupils still struggle with the comprehension of the more challenging words they face in key stage 2. Consequently, outcomes are lower in reading than they are in writing and mathematics and not enough pupils are yet reaching the highest possible standards in reading.
- A number of the most able disadvantaged pupils reported that they do not use the local public library unlike other pupils in the school who borrow books regularly. All pupils spoken to agreed that the school library is underdeveloped and inaccessible for much of the time as it is used as a classroom.
- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities from key stage 1 to 2 has improved in writing but remains below that of other pupils in reading and mathematics. Recent changes in leadership are beginning to lead to improvements for current pupils. However, monitoring the impact of additional activities and support outside the classroom for these pupils is not yet as strong as it is for support in class.
- Leaders monitor teaching very closely and have an accurate view of where it is strong over time and where further improvement is needed. This knowledge led to a strategic placement of senior leaders as additional teachers with year groups or where class teachers needed additional support to become consistently good. Monitoring of additional activities outside the classroom to support disadvantaged pupils is not as strong and consequently the pupil premium strategy is not yet sufficiently evaluative.
- Leaders are keen to improve and have engaged in extensive external reviews and monitoring to improve their practice, including with the Birmingham Education Partnership. As a result, they have an accurate view of what they still need to improve further.
- Governors know the school well and bring a high degree of support and challenge to the school's leaders. They are well informed and know in detail the strengths and areas for development in outcomes and teaching. They work closely with those externally monitoring the school to increase their understanding of how well the school is doing.
- The level of persistent absence has almost halved over the last three years as a result of the school's determination to improve attendance. The role of the pastoral manager has been critical in reaching out to parents. Overall absence is well below the level of 2013 and is now much closer to the national average for all pupils.
- There have been no permanent exclusions over the last few years and the level of fixed-term exclusions has fallen to below the national average. Pupils reported that overall behaviour in school is good with just one or two exceptions. Pupils seen in lessons and around school behaved well and had a very positive attitude towards their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- outcomes in reading by the end of Year 6 are improved, including for the most able disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, by promoting more opportunities for pupils to read in school and at home
- additional activities and support for pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, outside the classroom are monitored as closely as lessons in the classroom and, for disadvantaged pupils, evaluated through the pupil premium strategy.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met you and your deputy headteacher, as well as other senior members of staff. I met four members of the governing body including the chair and two parent governors. I took part in a learning walk with you, visiting parts of seven lessons. I also observed pupils as they moved around the school. I conducted a scrutiny of pupils' books with a senior leader. I met with two groups of pupils and heard four of them read. There were no responses to the online survey, Parent View, and one free-text response. I spoke to three parents during my visit to the early years. I considered the school's analysis of recent pupil performance and evaluated other records including those concerning keeping pupils safe.