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6 October 2016

Lindsay Rebbitt
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Dear Lindsay Rebbitt

Short inspection of Mengham Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

Your leadership has secured the good quality of education currently provided in the school.

You joined the school in September 2015 and wasted no time in raising expectations. The standards at the end of key stage 1 in 2015 had declined. You rightly focused your attention on the effectiveness of phonics teaching because the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check had been below the national average every year since 2013.

You have worked tirelessly to challenge and eradicate weak leadership and teaching through the appropriate processes and procedures. The impact of your leadership is evident in the improvements in the progress and outcomes for pupils who are currently in the school. Standards are rising in the early years, significantly in phonics and current Year 2 pupils are well placed to achieve good outcomes. The outcomes for Year 2 pupils in 2016 are a legacy of teaching that was not effective.

Your work is highly valued by all. Parents are wholly positive about your leadership. Staff, new and experienced, recognise the clarity, determination and support you provide. Staff respect the time you invest in them and your clear knowledge about effective teaching and learning. Governors are justifiably delighted with your appointment and recognise your achievements in taking a school that was not as effective as it should have been and improving it rapidly.

One of your most significant actions in shaping the ambitious culture in the school was to look closely at the identification of pupils who may or may not have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You asked the right questions about the high proportion of pupils that had been identified and you worked closely with the junior school to clarify your thinking. All staff are now clear about the distinction between a specific learning need that may impact on the rate of progress and those pupils with lower starting points who need to catch up. The achievement of all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is now analysed closely, with clear and accurate identification of those pupils who do also have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school is a calm and happy place to learn. Relationships between all adults and pupils are warm and caring. New children arriving in the school settle very quickly and the Reception Year classrooms are a hive of purposeful activity. Older pupils are focused in lessons and are keen to share their achievements and talk about their learning and targets.

Your current improvement plans are ambitious for the school. You have rightly identified that levels of attendance overall must improve. Your clear stance with parents about not taking holidays in term time and needing to evidence medical absence is beginning to have a positive impact, but more needs to be done. Your robust assessments also show that current Year 2 pupils need to improve their grammar within their writing to ensure that the proportion of pupils working at age-related expectations is similar in reading, writing and mathematics. You also recognise that the current improvement plans require some refining to ensure that the significant differences in each cohort of pupils is recognised. For example, you and your early years team have already identified that the children currently in the Reception Year have significantly different starting points to last year's children.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors recognised the many strengths in the school, including the early years outside area and the behaviour and safety of pupils. You have been successful in maintaining these strengths. You have also addressed the areas inspectors identified as requiring improvement, notably improving the quality of feedback to pupils about how to improve their work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You hold detailed records and carefully track every staff concern and all communication with outside agencies. Governors review your processes regularly and understand that they are there to check the systems and not the information you hold. Your weekly meetings to exchange key information about pupils and families ensures that all staff know what they need to know. Minutes accurately feed back key information to staff who are unable to attend and this ensures that the whole school community is well equipped to support pupils.

The induction for new staff is a strength. Teaching and administrative staff are given the same important messages and policies. For example, your focus on staff

use of social media is clear and understood. Your draft child protection policy, awaiting governing body ratification, is clearly linked to current statutory guidance.

Inspection findings

- Your determination and ambition has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. You have invested time in challenging leadership in the school that did not meet your high expectations. Initially, this has created significant extra work for yourself. However, you have used the local authority and worked well with local schools to help you drive change.
- The governing body is effective and invigorated under new leadership. Governors now have the processes, knowledge and skills to hold leaders to account. Governors engage in a range of development opportunities, including joining staff training sessions, to ensure they are fully abreast of key aspects of the school's work.
- Improvement plans are ambitious and shared with all staff. However, some of the whole-school targets are too generic and do not take account of the starting points of some groups of pupils.
- The teaching of phonics and reading is good. Children make good progress in the early years, sometimes from low starting points. Teachers and support staff work well with groups of pupils ensuring that the learning is matched to the pupils' current levels of knowledge and skills.
- The proportion of pupils in 2016 who met the expected standard in their Year 1 phonics check was a significant improvement on previous years. The proportion of pupils who met the standard in the Year 2 was also high.
- Reading has been a priority in the school. Pupils who do not read regularly at home read more frequently at school. The most able readers are provided with challenging texts and tackle complex words with confidence, using their phonetic skills. The pupils who are reading at levels below age-related expectations develop an enjoyment of reading through sensitive support. They are confident to try and sound out words and show resilience when they need adult support to help them.
- The identification of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. You work closely with the nurseries that feed into your school and the junior school where most of your pupils move onto, to ensure that information is shared effectively. Staff in the early years make accurate baseline assessments.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points, including those who are disadvantaged. Staff are ambitious for what pupils can achieve and the planned learning experiences provide appropriate challenge.
- You have begun to tackle pupil absence but there is more to do. The school is currently following the appropriate legal processes with a very small number of families who significantly impact on the school's absence figures overall. There is also case study evidence that targeted work by

school leaders has improved some pupils' attendance from significantly low levels. In 2016 there was a significant reduction in the persistent absence levels of disadvantaged pupils and a slight increase in disadvantaged pupils' attendance overall. However, absence levels remain too high.

- Your leadership has improved teaching in the school. You have a razor sharp insight into what constitutes effective teaching and have used this knowledge to successfully tackle ineffective teaching and underperformance.
- Consistently good teaching and learning in your school are raising standards. In 2016, the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development at the end of the foundation stage increased on previous years. The starting points for this cohort were low and therefore progress was significant. Current Year 2 pupils made good progress in Year 1, including the most able, those who were behind and needed to catch up and disadvantaged pupils.
- The vast majority of pupils in Year 2 are now working at age-related expectations in mathematics and reading. However, you have rightly identified that the proportion of pupils on track to meet the expected standards in writing at the end of the year needs to increase further.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils working at expected levels in writing at the end of key stage 1 increases
- the attendance levels of all pupils improves, including those who are frequently absent
- the targets in your improvement plans are refined for cohorts and groups within cohorts to make sure that starting points are carefully considered.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Cole
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I worked with you during this inspection to look closely at:

- the effectiveness of phonics teaching, learning and assessment
- the identification, provision and outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the impact of your work on improving attendance, including among disadvantaged pupils who miss school frequently
- the impact of your leadership since 2015 in improving teaching and learning and therefore outcomes for pupils
- the effectiveness of your safeguarding procedures and the culture in the school.

I met with you, a group of governors and a group of staff who joined your school recently. I looked at the 25 responses on Parent View. I accompanied you on a visit to lessons and we looked at pupils' books from all classes. I evaluated your self-evaluation and pupil performance information. I checked the effectiveness of your safeguarding arrangements, including those related to recruiting staff.