

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Sarah Draper  
Headteacher  
Pennington Infant School  
Priestlands Road  
Pennington  
Lymington  
Hampshire  
SO41 8HX

Dear Ms Draper

### **Short inspection of Pennington Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 14 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.

Since the last inspection, there has been a significant turnover of staff and governors, with very few who were present at the last inspection remaining. You joined the school in September 2013, replacing an interim headteacher, and have appointed your own leadership team. You are about to go on maternity leave and the deputy headteacher is taking on the role of acting headteacher during this period.

### **This school continues to be good.**

Following the previous inspection, the school's outcomes saw a rapid decline. However, your commitment, determination and effective leadership have ensured that the school once again provides a good quality of education. You lead the school with conviction and a strong moral purpose that you are responsible for improving your pupils' life chances. You have recruited and developed like-minded staff who are equally committed to doing all they can for the pupils in their care. This supportive and nurturing approach is recognised by parents and pupils, who speak enthusiastically about the caring staff at the school.

You and your staff's dedication and hard work has brought about steady improvement in results. For the first time in many years, the percentage of pupils who are working at the expected standard is in line with or greater than other schools nationally. The school's improving results are particularly impressive when account is taken of the short-term placements that frequently have an impact on attainment.

Leaders and staff know the pupils very well and plan opportunities which meet their needs. There is a strong focus on pupils' emotional and mental well-being, which is supported well. Consequently, pupils come to school with a positive approach to learning and almost all make good or better progress.

You have successfully tackled the weaknesses from the previous inspection. Teaching is now consistently good; work is matched well to pupils' needs and standards of presentation and handwriting are much higher.

The early years outdoor area is now an asset to the early years foundation stage provision. The change of location and increased size, along with the new resources and well-planned organisation, have resulted in a really appealing and useful learning space. Children are very keen to be outside; they use the space and equipment well and, as a result, they rapidly broaden their skills in many areas, such as physical development and working together.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and staff ensure that pupils are safe through thorough record-keeping and swift follow-up of concerns. All staff are appropriately trained and undertake their responsibilities reliably. Consequently, concerns are raised immediately and, when necessary, outside agencies are involved to ensure the right outcome for pupils. Governors and leaders are proactive in their approach to site safety. An example of this is the recent audit undertaken by governors and leaders, which identified that the site was not as secure as it could be for the youngest children. With support from the local authority this was quickly resolved.

Despite their young age, all pupils learn to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Year 1 pupils were able to tell me, in detail, how they cross the road with care. Attendance has declined slightly this year and leaders are clear about the individual reasons for this. Instances of high absence are taken very seriously. As a result, parents who do not ensure that their children are in school on time, and every day, are held to account by the school and ultimately the local authority.

### **Inspection findings**

- You, the deputy headteacher and governors have implemented significant changes in the past three years so that the school is well placed to improve further. Staff recognise and appreciate the support and development that they receive to ensure they are effective teachers and leaders. This has resulted in significantly fewer staff changes, which is helping to secure better quality teaching. Teachers and teaching assistants describe the school as being a family, where everyone supports each other. Parents comment that they feel they can approach staff about anything.
- You have rightly prioritised the need to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics. There is breadth and balance to the curriculum but some of the other subjects are not as developed as you would like them to be. Your plans to develop subject leaders should help to drive improvements in the other areas of learning.

- The school's work to promote reading is helping pupils to achieve well. Parents are well supported to listen to their children read and help develop their skills. In school, teachers provide well-planned reading sessions and link texts well to written activities. This, combined with the high profile that the school gives to reading, is helping pupils to be enthusiastic about reading and make good progress.
- You and the deputy headteacher check teaching regularly in a range of ways, including observing lessons and looking at pupils' work. You have an accurate picture of teaching across the school and help teachers to improve when required. As a result, teachers are effective and plan useful lessons, which pupils enjoy and which result in good outcomes in lessons and over time.
- Governors have become more effective as a result of local authority support. They now ask more challenging questions of leaders and hold you to account for pupils' progress. Governors know the school well and are appropriately focused on the priorities for improvement. They have put sensible arrangements in place so that the acting headteacher is well supported during your absence.
- Generally, starting points at the school are lower than is typical. Staff in the early years focus on developing children's speaking, listening and physical development so that they are well equipped to move forward in other areas. Children make good or very good progress during the year to catch up, so more children reach a good level of development than do so in other schools nationally. In Years 1 and 2, the effective teaching continues so that almost all pupils who have been at the school from the early years to Year 2 are ready for their move to the junior school. The most able pupils consistently make good progress and achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- When you joined the school, pupils' disruptive behaviour was inhibiting learning in some classes and for some pupils. Through a local authority project, and a consistent approach to managing behaviour, which pupils explained clearly to me, behaviour is much improved. However, because these improvements have not been tracked and analysed, leaders are not clear how they can raise standards of behaviour even further.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is higher than for other schools nationally. You provide a great deal of individual and useful support to enable these pupils to do as well as others. Progress information shows that the disadvantaged pupils who are at the school for over a year achieve better than others nationally.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leaders' skills are further developed so they can drive improvements in their areas of responsibility
- improvements in behaviour are analysed carefully so that leaders are clear about what more they can do to raise standards of behaviour even higher.

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

Louise Adams  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you, the acting headteacher and other leaders. I also met a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body and the safeguarding governor. I met with the local authority adviser and held a meeting with teachers and teaching assistants. With leaders, I visited each class, where I observed teaching, spoke to pupils, listened to some pupils read and scrutinised work in pupils' books from the current and previous academic years. I also spoke to pupils at breaktime and observed behaviour. I spoke to some parents who attended the information morning and considered the 32 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I analysed a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures.