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Ms S Hanson
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Dear Ms Hanson

Short inspection of Kings Heath Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 22 September 2016 with Chris Ogden, Ofsted Inspector, 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 February 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The structure and membership of the school's leadership team have remained largely unchanged since the previous inspection. A strategic business manager has been successfully appointed. The governing body has been reconstituted and some governors have become members of different committees. The school is fully staffed, although some staff are either on, or recently returned from, leave. You are able to ensure continuity of teaching in these cases.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The culture of the school is inclusive, and diversity is celebrated. There are no discernible differences in the opportunities that different pupils have and you work hard to make sure that no child feels left out. Parents are supportive of, and note the strengths of, the inclusive and multicultural nature of the learning environment. High levels of effective communication exist between the school and parents, and the school is firmly rooted within the local community.

At the previous inspection, senior leaders and governors were asked to improve the impact of marking on learning. You have taken action to address this, including introducing clear expectations that, when they are planning, teachers will consider how pupils' work will be assessed. A school-wide system of using symbols when marking is in operation and ensures that teachers consider the same things when marking work. This system is understood well by pupils. Detailed feedback includes

specific actions that pupils respond to in order to further their learning. Pupils also review their own work, and that of their classmates, providing useful comments about how it could be improved.

Following the last inspection, improving the quality of pupils' handwriting was identified as a particular priority. Leaders have successfully introduced a handwriting scheme. This is embedded throughout the school from Reception to Year 6. You have communicated clearly your expectations of handwriting and presentation to all staff. Leaders remain vigilant to ensure that your expectations are consistently met. For example, they check pupils' books and ensure that teachers include comments about handwriting when marking work. As you have effectively addressed handwriting, it is no longer an area needing improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

A culture of ensuring that all pupils are safe pervades the school. The leadership team makes sure that all safeguarding requirements are met. Arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. Staff and governors have received relevant and up-to-date training and are clear about their roles and responsibilities around safeguarding children. Staff are confident that pupils are safe and that behaviour is consistently managed. A number of staff have undertaken enhanced safeguarding training, so a designated person is always available to report concerns to. There is clear and open communication between the leaders with specific responsibility for safeguarding. This contributes to the culture of vigilance within the school. Key leaders carefully monitor actions taken to support vulnerable pupils. Organisations external to the school are involved in a timely and appropriate manner when specialist support is required. Leaders keep careful records of incidents of bullying, and ensure that support is provided for victims and perpetrators in the rare instances that bullying occurs.

Pupils state that they feel safe at all times in school, and confidently explain what they would do in a range of situations to keep themselves safe. For example, they talk about e-safety, road safety and anti-bullying initiatives. Pupils are clear that there are adults at school whom they could talk to about any problems they may have. Parents agree that their children are safe at school, that children are well looked after and that concerns are promptly and successfully addressed. This view is summarised by one parent who commented, 'The senior leadership team is always very approachable and available to parents and pupils within and outside of school hours.'

Inspection findings

- Leaders have successfully introduced systems where teachers collect, use and pass on comprehensive information about how well pupils are doing to the next class teacher. This ensures that teachers know pupils' starting points, and are aware of any differences in the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils, for example disadvantaged pupils or those who speak English as an additional language. Teachers use this information to good effect in their planning, for example, how most-able pupils are grouped together for work and

the tasks they are provided with. However, sometimes, in lessons, these pupils are not moved on to more challenging work when they are ready to do so.

- Governors are highly skilled and enthusiastic about the school. They use these qualities to good effect. Mindful of the benefits of strong governance, they take opportunities to network with governors from other schools, and use these experiences to validate their own work. Governors hold leaders to account and rigorously check the quality and validity of information provided. They use this to measure progress towards strategic goals. Strong communication between governors, and with leaders, ensures that there is a culture of openness and of self-evaluation at the school.
- Leaders make full use of the local authority's commissioned services. These include opportunities to form links with other schools. Kings Heath Primary School benefits from these networks, for example checking the standard of marking of key assessments. Middle leaders have enhanced their skills and confidence in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. They use these skills well within their areas of responsibility to ensure that pupils make progress. Other schools benefit from the experience and expertise that exists at Kings Heath.
- Leaders rightly continue to make the further development of pupils' skills in writing a high priority, for example by arranging additional training and professional development for teachers. Opportunities for pupils to write at length in topic work are now included in the curriculum. Inspectors observed pupils creating an imaginative piece of writing in response to their learning about the ancient Egyptians. Teachers used questions effectively to identify particular features of writing, including grammar. Discussion in the classroom allowed pupils to share their writing, and make suggestions to each other about how their work could be further improved.
- Leadership of writing is strong, and detailed analysis identifies areas to further improve. Leaders have a clear view of the challenges that some pupils face to improve their writing. They are clear about future key actions to take for further development. Some of these changes, such as a focus on spelling, are in their infancy and so their effects are not yet demonstrable.
- In the early years, children engage with a wide range of learning activities, indoors and outside. Adults make links between the curriculum and children's interests to engage them and encourage their participation. All adults within the setting regularly observe and assess children. As a result, the curriculum is carefully shaped to children's needs, and they are moved on to the next stage of development when ready.
- Over time, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception has increased and it is now above the national average. A smaller proportion of boys than girls achieve a good level of development, but this difference is diminishing.

- Improvements in outcomes at the end of Reception result in pupils entering key stage 1 with more security of basic skills. Levels of attainment at the end of key stage 1 are consistently above national levels, including for disadvantaged pupils. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who achieve at higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics has historically been much lower than nationally. There are no notable differences between boys' and girls' attainment at key stage 1.
- By the end of key stage 2, differences between pupils' progress in writing and their progress in reading and mathematics are diminishing because rates of progress in writing have increased. However, pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, still make slower progress in writing than in reading and mathematics. Also, the proportion of pupils working at greater depth within the expected standard in writing is lower than the national average.
- Pupils describe a friendly, tolerant and inclusive culture at the school. They state that all pupils are included, and those who are new or different are welcomed into the school community. Pupils are clear that equality of opportunity sometimes means differences in provision, and can give examples of how some of their peers receive extra support to give them the same opportunities in school.
- Pupils' attendance continues to be similar to the national average, overall. However, absence rates of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are disadvantaged, remain high.
- Leaders continue to make attendance a priority, and investigate the main reasons for some pupils' persistent absence. Additional strategies to improve attendance have been implemented, including meeting with some parents to explore issues of poor attendance. Governors have tracked the impact of these meetings and report their positive effect on the attendance of some pupils. However, this has not substantially altered overall absence rates of these key groups. Leaders plan further innovation to address the important issue of regular attendance for all pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in writing continues to improve so that it matches the rates of progress they make in reading and mathematics
- the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent from school improves, particularly those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors joined you and the deputy headteacher in short visits to lessons where we spoke to pupils about their work and looked at work in their books. A sample of pupils' books was also evaluated. Inspectors met you and other senior leaders, including the designated lead for safeguarding in the school, and with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority's commissioned services.

Inspectors evaluated a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and action plans, recent information on pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and other records about keeping pupils safe, their attendance and behaviour.

Pupils gave inspectors their views on the school when they spoke to us during a formal meeting, in lessons and at social times. School staff's views were taken into account through the 58 responses to an inspection questionnaire for staff. The views of parents were considered through the 195 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and through informal discussions at the start of the school day.