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Mrs Nina Rogers
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Dear Mrs Rogers

Short inspection of Chapel Fields Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 24 January 2017, 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.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is despite the departure of a number of staff, including some senior leaders. The deputy headteacher is currently on secondment to a local school, as interim headteacher. Her role is being carried out ably by two assistant headteachers. You and they form a cohesive and effective team, which utilises each person's skills to the full.

This senior team has an accurate view of what is working well at the school and what needs further improvement. When a concern is found, you take swift and effective action. For example, in September you were dissatisfied with the teaching of reading across the school. You instigated an overhaul of reading lessons. Pupils' reading scores have increased considerably in a short time as a result.

You systematically tackled the areas for improvement that were identified at the previous inspection. You carefully diagnosed what needed to change, then provided effective training to improve the quality of teaching and, in particular, to increase teachers' skills at teaching mathematics. As a result, standards in mathematics increased steadily until 2016. You unpicked the reasons why results compared less favourably to the national figure in 2016 and put remedial action in place for this year. Leaders regularly check pupils' mathematics books to see if the actions are making a difference to pupils' learning. You give clear instruction to teachers if

pupils' books do not meet your requirements. However, these checks have not always been meticulous enough to spot that not all pupils follow teachers' prompts on how they can improve their work. Similarly, leaders' checks have not diagnosed that some pupils do not understand what the various guidance symbols used by teachers mean.

You have created a lovely environment, within which pupils enjoy learning and learn well. Pupils get on well together. They behave well in lessons and work hard. They are willing and able to help one another with their learning. Staff enjoy pupils' company and vice versa. All take genuine interest in each other as people. Pupils are confident and self-assured. They are developing strong values that prepare them well to be responsible British citizens.

Leaders have explored ways of working more closely with parents. The school has achieved a Leading Parent Partnership Award in recognition of its success. A parents forum now meets each half term to discuss areas of concern and to suggest ways for the school to improve. Governors seek parents' views over issues such as homework. Nevertheless, you acknowledge that some parents feel their concerns are not always listened to or acted upon rigorously enough. You hope to break down any remaining barriers in communication by allowing parents, in future, to collect their children from the playground at the end of the school day, rather than them having to wait in the street.

You and your senior leaders are keen to seek and act upon advice. For example, you have an effective working relationship with the local authority. Termly visits from the adviser help you evaluate different aspects of the school's effectiveness. These visits are appropriately challenging and have led to some important improvements, such as the addition of an extra layer of recording around actions taken in cases of concern about child protection. This has further enhanced the school's already-secure child protection procedures.

Safeguarding is effective.

The governing body oversees the keeping of records about the suitability of staff to work with children. This ensures that checks are thorough and correctly recorded. Staff are appropriately trained in all aspects of safeguarding. They are alert to a wide range of indicators of concern, including those that may suggest pupils are at risk of exposure to extremist views. All concerns are logged swiftly and followed up rigorously.

Leaders respond decisively, where necessary, to ensure that arrangements for safeguarding are as effective as possible. For example, during the inspection leaders became aware of a possible risk. A clear plan of action was immediately drawn up and a swift timescale for implementation was agreed. In addition, leaders identified ways of minimising the risk until the new arrangements are fully in place. This is indicative of leaders' commitment to ensuring that pupils are safe.

Inspection findings

- Pupils are becoming more skilled at interpreting texts and inferring meaning that is not explicit. This is as a result of improvements made to the teaching of reading.
- High-quality training has increased teachers' confidence in teaching mathematics. Effective guidance has helped them better understand the requirements of the new national curriculum for mathematics.
- Mathematics lessons have been revised this year, with the aim of challenging pupils more effectively. Pupils enjoy this approach. All spoken to said lessons are now fun and more interesting. They like being allowed to select their own level of challenge and willingly move on quickly to harder work. Sometimes, however, the activities on offer are not challenging enough, so pupils cannot not move beyond what they already know.
- Leaders expect teachers to plan mathematics tasks that help pupils practise basic number skills, then apply these immediately to challenging mathematical problems. Where teachers do this well, pupils' ability to reason mathematically is deepening. However, teachers sometimes make pupils spend so much time on the basic skills that the application does not happen as intended. This limits their pupils' mathematical understanding.
- Most teachers give very helpful guidance on how pupils can improve their mathematics work. Where pupils act upon this advice, their work improves noticeably. However, some pupils choose not to follow the suggestions. For these pupils, progress is not as swift as it could be. Pupils in several classes told me that they do not really understand the meaning of the symbols and codes written in their books by teachers.
- Pupils' books and the school's achievement records show that there are no significant differences in outcomes between different groups of pupils across the school. Where differences exist, they are more reflective of a slight variation in the quality of teaching between classes. Leaders' monitoring records show that effective action is being taken to iron out these minor inconsistencies.
- Pupils' attendance is recorded meticulously. The family support worker follows up all absences immediately and rigorously. As a result, some pupils' previous low attendance has improved significantly. Nevertheless, the school's published attendance figures are adversely affected by the small number of families who persist in allowing their children to stay off school frequently. Leaders are continuing to try to identify what more can be done to persuade these parents to bring their children to school more often.
- Leaders actively seek ways to improve the school's partnership with parents. This has led to stronger channels of communication. Many parents are very happy with the school and say it is led well. However, a significant minority feel that they do not have enough information about their child's progress. Some feel that the school does not respond well enough to concerns. Leaders believe that their decision to change the arrangements for parents to collect their children at the end of the school day will facilitate easier day-to-day communication and help

them address parents' worries more quickly.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- their scrutiny of pupils' work is rigorous in identifying the impact of teaching on pupils' learning in mathematics, so as to eliminate inconsistencies
- the school's chosen approaches to increasing challenge in mathematics lessons and ensuring that pupils learn to reason mathematically enable pupils to develop deep mathematical understanding
- increasingly deep analysis of the reasons behind the persistent absence of a few pupils is followed thoroughly and consistently, and that this leads to further improvement in the attendance of this group.

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

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you; your two assistant headteachers; other school staff; two governors, including the chair; and the school's adviser from the local authority. I spoke informally to pupils in lessons and to parents as they collected their children from school. I looked at the responses to the Parent View survey and the survey of staff views. We visited lessons together. I looked at the work in a selection of pupils' mathematics books. I considered the school's self-evaluation and its plans for development. I took into account pupils' standards of attainment and rates of progress. I examined a range of school policies, including those for safeguarding and child protection. The inspection focused particularly on the progress and achievement of pupils in mathematics; whether differences exist in outcomes for different groups of pupils; the effectiveness of the school's partnership with parents; and pupils' rates of attendance.