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Mrs Dawn Cooper
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Cooper

Short inspection of Guns Village Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 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 December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You and the leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide strong and determined leadership for the school, relentlessly driving forward improvements so pupils continue to make good progress. You and your staff work particularly hard to support some of the most vulnerable pupils in overcoming barriers to learning. You are passionate about giving all pupils the best possible chance of succeeding in the future, enabling them to grow into responsible, considerate adults. Governors effectively support you in this quest and share your ambition.

You and the deputy headteacher have an astute understanding of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. This is because you use a range of information about the progress pupils make to evaluate what is working well. The school development plan is comprehensive and focuses on the right priorities and actions to bring about improvement. Leaders check the quality of teaching regularly and look at pupils' work to get a clear understanding of the aspects of teaching that need improvement. Once identified, leaders quickly tackle these through coaching staff, or providing support and training. As a result, any inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning are promptly addressed.

The wider leadership team works collaboratively and effectively towards agreed aims that are consistent with the school development plan. They carry out their roles and responsibilities diligently with a clear focus on improving learning. They are skilful in using pupils' assessment information to identify any weaknesses in teaching, which they swiftly address. As a result, the consistency in the quality of teaching in key stage 1, identified at the last inspection, has improved.

You have formed a thoughtful and insightful team of leaders who are highly reflective of their practice and constantly question whether what they are doing is helping pupils to learn more effectively. You encourage leaders to take time to research new and effective ways to improve teaching and learning. For example, teachers adopted a new approach to the teaching of reading which has resulted in good outcomes for pupils who now read with better understanding. However, not all teachers are promoting reading as well as others.

Leaders have worked hard to create an engaging curriculum which fires up the imagination of pupils and inspires them to learn. Teachers provide memorable learning experiences which are purposeful and hold pupils' interests. There is a tangible buzz of excitement throughout the school about learning. For example, during a singing assembly where pupils successfully sang a two-part harmony, they were introduced to the musical term 'rallentando'. They then demonstrated this well using their voices. The school environment is bright, attractive and celebrates the achievements of the pupils. For example, pupils have created life-size statues of characters from history. These statues, such as Poseidon from Greek mythology, are prominently positioned along the school corridors.

Leaders have created an inclusive school environment where everyone is respected and valued. Pupils demonstrate a quiet confidence and show enjoyment in their learning. They behave very well in lessons and around school, and show positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils and almost all of their parents agree that they are happy in school.

You and governors take care to use the school's reliable assessment information to check on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. In the main, funding to support these pupils is wisely spent, but you do not have an overall strategy that allows you to identify specific setbacks with regard to their progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have made sure that keeping pupils safe is of paramount importance to the school's work. Leaders responsible for safeguarding have established a strong culture within the school of keeping pupils safe. They have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. All staff understand the school's robust policies and procedures for safeguarding. Leaders effectively use records about pupils' behaviour and well-being to identify any vulnerable groups and provide additional support to these pupils when necessary. Those responsible for safeguarding evaluate systems and practices carefully, making changes as necessary to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Leaders carry out rigorous checks on all new staff and volunteers to ensure that they are suitable to work with pupils. Staff training about safeguarding is thorough and is supplemented by weekly updates to keep staff fully informed. As a result, all staff have a very clear understanding of the actions to take if a child may be at risk of harm. They are clear about reporting procedures and teachers' mandatory duties relating to female genital mutilation. Governors are provided with informative reports about safeguarding which enable them to carry out their statutory responsibilities effectively.

Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe because they are taught well about a range of topics in personal, social and health education lessons and through other curriculum subjects. For example, they have a good understanding about stranger danger, road safety and keeping safe when using the internet. All pupils reported feeling safe in school. The large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed three key lines of enquiry. In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, I explored how effectively the pupil premium funding is being used for disadvantaged pupils, how leaders are tackling the achievement of boys and the quality of the teaching of reading. I also explained that the school's website lacks some required information about the pupil premium.
- In 2016, slightly fewer than half of the Year 6 pupils left school having achieved the expected national standard in reading. However, progress over time from their lower starting points was broadly in line with the national average. Boys performed much better in comparison to girls, and made more progress than other boys nationally. The progress of disadvantaged pupils was broadly in line with the national figure for other pupils nationally. Current pupils, including boys, are making good progress in reading.
- You were rightly concerned with the achievement of the boys in key stage 1 who did not perform as well in reading and writing in 2016 compared with the girls. However, strategies implemented by leaders this year have already had a positive effect on increasing boys' rates of progress in reading and writing. Younger pupils, including boys, are making rapid progress in phonics because of very effective teaching.
- Leadership of reading is good. Leaders reviewed the provision for reading following the 2016 results and made changes to the way it is taught. This has had a positive effect on improving teaching and enabled pupils to make faster rates of progress. However, there are still some inconsistencies between classes with regards to access to books and teachers' promotion of reading. For example, some classrooms have attractive book corners with an exciting range of books, whereas others have more limited stock and are less enticing.

- Leaders' use of the pupil premium funding generally supports the social, emotional and academic needs of the large majority of disadvantaged pupils. The funding enables them to have additional teaching time and participate in wider curriculum experiences. However, the school's pupil premium strategy does not yet identify the specific barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. Because of this, when gaps in pupils' learning occur in different classes or subjects, this is not always clearly identified so that funding can be directed towards appropriate catch-up activities.
- In 2016, the progress disadvantaged pupils made by the end of key stage 2 was broadly similar to other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there was a relatively large difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics and other pupils in the school.
- Mathematics is taught well and the current work in books of disadvantaged pupils indicates that most are achieving well. Pupils show a good understanding of a broad range of mathematical topics. However, teaching is not providing pupils with enough opportunities to develop their mathematical reasoning skills, which slows progress.
- The teaching of writing is effective and pupils are eager to write. Teachers help pupils, particularly those who speak English as an additional language, to widen their language use and broaden their vocabulary. For example, teachers encourage the use of 'table dictionaries' which pupils use to identify and learn unfamiliar words. Teachers give pupils regular opportunities to edit and develop their writing, which helps them to make better progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- a comprehensive pupil premium strategy is published on the school's website in accordance with Department for Education requirements
- expenditure of the pupil premium is more closely matched to addressing the specific barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils encounter
- teachers provide more opportunities for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics and work at greater depth
- all teachers adopt a consistent approach to promoting reading across the school and ensure that all pupils have equal access to a range of high-quality books.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held discussions with you and the deputy headteacher about the school's self-evaluation. I met with a group of assistant headteachers to discuss leadership. I also held a meeting with governors and spoke on the telephone to the local authority school improvement adviser. I joined you and the deputy headteacher on short visits to lessons where we spoke to pupils about their work and sampled some of their work. I listened to pupils read and also had a discussion with a group of pupils from key stages 1 and 2. I evaluated a range of documents, including the school development plan, governors' documents and records about keeping pupils safe. The views of parents were considered through the 27 responses to Parent View. I also spoke to parents on the playground at the end of the school day.