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Anita Saville
Headteacher
Joseph Hood Primary School
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Dear Ms Saville

Short inspection of Joseph Hood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You and the deputy headteacher are a strong and effective team. Together, you reflect carefully on which aspects of the school's work could be even better. Leaders, including governors, challenge each other regularly about the impact of their work on improving pupils' outcomes. As a result, the school's current plans for improvement prioritise clearly the actions leaders need to take to strengthen teaching and raise standards still further. You have nurtured the talents and skills of middle leaders so that they too contribute effectively to your drive for improvement.

Governors are highly ambitious for the school. They have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make, including those who are disadvantaged. Governors visit the school regularly to check for themselves how well pupils learn and achieve. As a result, they ask leaders challenging questions and hold them to account fully for the impact of their work. This has made a strong contribution to the school providing a good quality of education to its pupils.

The mutual respect between staff and pupils is evident in their strong relationships. The inclusive ethos of the school and pupils' positive attitudes towards learning have been sustained since the previous inspection. Parents are very supportive of the school. One parent commented, 'The school is like a second home for my children.' Parents value the openness of senior leaders and the approachability of

staff.

Since the previous inspection, you have taken effective action to strengthen the quality of teaching. Leaders work effectively alongside teachers to help them reflect and improve the impact of their practice on pupils' progress. As a result, the majority of pupils make good progress from their different starting points by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. However, pupils' achievement in reading is not as strong and, in 2016, too few disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard. In response to this, leaders have improved the way that reading is taught by ensuring that pupils are challenged to develop higher-level reading skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

A culture of safeguarding is clearly evident in the school. You carry out thorough checks on the suitability of staff to work in the school. Governors routinely make sure that records of these checks meet statutory requirements.

You ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders share information frequently and keep staff up to date with current guidance. All staff are clear about the procedures they need to follow to effectively promote pupils' safety. They understand well the different factors that may present a risk to pupils' well-being, including the risks associated with radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. Parents I spoke to, and the parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, say that they feel their children are safe at the school and that they are confident about speaking to staff if they have any concerns.

Leaders invest significant amounts of time in understanding how pupils' individual circumstances may affect the nature and extent of the risks to their well-being. Leaders work closely with a range of agencies to ensure that pupils get the right support when it is needed. You also provide a range of services within school to effectively support pupils and families who may be having difficulties. Pupils say that they feel safe in school because staff listen to and act on their concerns.

Inspection findings

- I first considered whether leaders are taking effective action to develop early reading skills and to reduce any differences in how well groups of pupils achieve. I reviewed the assessment information for the end of the early years and the phonics check for 2016. This showed that a lower proportion of boys had achieved the expected standard in reading than was the case nationally. In the phonics screening check, the proportion of girls and disadvantaged pupils who achieved the expected standard was below other pupils nationally.
- In response to these outcomes, leaders have taken effective steps to strengthen the teaching of early reading. Visits to classrooms showed that teachers use their strong subject knowledge to help pupils read and pronounce sounds correctly. You have organised the phonics teaching into smaller groups so that teaching is

more precisely matched to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils are making faster progress than they have done in the past.

- Children in the early years now begin their phonics learning at an earlier stage. Visits to the early years showed that teachers plan carefully how to develop children's reading skills and promote the enjoyment of reading. For example, in one classroom, a group of boys were in the well-resourced book corner, pretending to be spies. They read the books enthusiastically and made their own versions. However, you recognise that there are fewer opportunities for children to develop their reading skills in the outside environment and this slows their progress overall. Leaders have firm plans in place to develop this.
- Effective use is made of observations of children's achievements in reading. These are linked to age-related outcomes and boys are moving through these stages at a fast pace. As a result, the school's information shows that a greater proportion of boys are developing their reading skills well. Similarly, in the phonics check, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and girls are on track to achieve the standard expected for their age.
- Leaders have radically changed the approach to reading and greater emphasis is given to developing pupils' comprehension skills. Pupils say that the amount of time they spend reading at home and at school has increased. They particularly enjoy the challenging questions the teacher asks them about the books they have read. Visits to classrooms showed that pupils respond well to more demanding texts and are eager to share their predictions about what might happen next. For example, in one class, pupils were reading Philip Pullman's 'Northern Lights'. As a result, the school's assessment data shows that a larger proportion of pupils are working at higher levels in reading.
- Leaders and governors ensure that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds do not miss out and have access to texts that will challenge their reading skills. For example, at a recent book fair, all disadvantaged pupils were able to choose a book for free. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is not yet sufficiently rapid to ensure that they achieve the standard of which they are capable of by the end of key stage 2. This is because the teaching of reading for disadvantaged pupils is not consistently identifying the specific reading skills they need to acquire quickly. Leaders agreed that, for some pupils to make faster progress, teachers' guidance needed to be more precise to help pupils know what they need to do next.
- I next focused on how well leaders are developing pupils' skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling to ensure higher outcomes for pupils in writing. The 2016 key stage 2 statutory test information showed that a lower proportion of pupils achieved the expected standard in grammar, punctuation and spelling than other pupils nationally.
- Leaders have ensured that effective grammar and punctuation teaching takes place across the school. As a result, work in pupils' books shows that pupils of all abilities are able to effectively use these skills in their writing to record their ideas with increasing accuracy. For example, in Year 2, pupils used exclamation marks and question marks correctly to punctuate their dialogue, as part of their writing linked to the book 'The Way Home.' The school's assessment information and

pupils' work in books show that a larger proportion are on track to achieve the expected standard in writing. However, leaders have identified that the progress of low-attaining disadvantaged pupils is not as strong as that of their peers in the school or nationally. This is because some teachers do not routinely expect disadvantaged pupils to complete the same amount of work or complete work to the same high standard as other pupils.

- Finally, we focused on pupils' attendance; in particular, whether leaders are reversing the rising trend in absence and persistent absence, especially for pupils entitled to free school meals and those receiving support for special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have focused your efforts on improving attendance and have reduced absence to a level similar to the national average in the current year. Pupils who are entitled to free school meals and those who receive support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities are attending more regularly as a result of your effective work with external services and in-school provision for supporting and guiding families that may be struggling. 'In to win' is a well-received incentive that is supporting pupils to take responsibility for their attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers identify more precisely and promptly what disadvantaged pupils need to do to make faster progress in their reading and writing
- children in the early years develop their early reading skills effectively when they are learning in the outside provision.

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

Yours sincerely

Rebekah Iiyambo
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

- I held meetings with you, senior leaders and middle leaders.
- I met with representatives from the governing body.
- I visited classes across the school and scrutinised work in pupils' books with you, the deputy headteacher and middle leaders.
- I held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

- I listened to pupils read from Year 6 and Year 2 and spoke to pupils about their attitudes to reading and behaviour.
- I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and considered the 88 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.
- I scrutinised school documentation and records relating to safeguarding and behaviour.