

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Jill Roseblade
Executive headteacher
Siskin Junior School
21 Falcon Meadows Way
Rowner
Gosport
Hampshire
PO13 8AA

Dear Mrs Roseblade

Short inspection of Siskin Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 27 April 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 June 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 your head of schools work effectively together and provide strong and purposeful leadership to the school community. You identify accurately the school's strengths, and act with determination and without excuses to address aspects which you consider to be 'not good enough'. Staff, governors and pupils share your ambition and aspiration to keep raising standards. This is enabling the school to continue on its journey of ongoing improvement.

There have been many changes in the school since the last inspection, which took place before you took up your post. Many staff and governors have left, and many have joined the school, some quite recently. Despite the challenge of managing these changes, you have acted successfully on the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. Leaders' determined work has tackled pupils' poor attendance effectively, although a small number of pupils still do not attend school as regularly as they should. The staff's collective focus on establishing a culture of positive behaviour is supporting pupils to engage more actively in their learning. Staff value the high-quality training they receive, which has developed their understanding of how pupils learn. As a result, teachers and learning support assistants work increasingly effectively together to plan and deliver learning which challenges and supports pupils to make good progress from their different starting points.

You lead a staff team that is ambitious to make the school even better, for the benefit of all the pupils. You are driven to continue training and developing your staff, so that teaching and learning can become consistently as strong as they already are in many parts of the school. This will help more pupils to make the rapid progress needed to reach a greater depth of learning in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. You recognise that leaders and governors do not always check as carefully as they could to see the difference your work is making to key groups of pupils. This means leaders' actions are not always prioritised towards what will make a difference the most quickly.

Pupils at your school are happy and confident. They respond well to the clear expectations set for their behaviour, and they understand the consistently applied consequences of not meeting them. As a result, the atmosphere in the school is calm and purposeful, and pupils are friendly and welcoming. In lessons, pupils work well together, with many thriving on the opportunities to reason and solve problems, for example in mathematics. They enjoy learning across a wide range of subjects, which prepares them well for their next steps. Leaders recognise that opportunities to learn a modern foreign language are not well-developed and have plans in place to strengthen this aspect of the school. Parents and pupils identify how the school has improved, with pupils being challenged more and behaving better than in the past.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff work hard to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff receive regular and helpful training to ensure that they know their safeguarding duties. They work closely with pupils and their families, understanding their individual circumstances while expecting them to attend school regularly and to achieve their best. Pupils feel safe at school, and know what to do if they are worried about something. They are confident that adults will listen to any concerns they may have, and help to resolve them. Parents value the quality of support and care that pupils receive from staff. Several parents commented how the staff at Siskin go 'above and beyond' to help their children be an integral part of the community, which in turn enables them to make good progress with their learning.

Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are made on any adults working in school, and that detailed records are kept. They make sure that the culture of safeguarding within the school is underpinned by a clear policy which is understood by all. Leaders work closely and tenaciously with experts beyond the school to provide specific support for individual pupils and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Leaders keep high-quality records of this work, and review its effectiveness regularly.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we considered how leaders and governors ensure that pupil premium funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and other staff know who these pupils are, and monitor their

attendance, behaviour and achievement carefully. Governors review regularly how well all pupils, including the disadvantaged, are achieving compared with national figures. They check what leaders tell them by looking at pupils' work, so that they can hold leaders to account confidently. Leaders are refining the information they share, so that it focuses more closely on pupils' rates of progress and removing the barriers to learning experienced by these pupils.

- Disadvantaged pupils now attend school more regularly than in the past and are excluded from school less frequently because their needs are met increasingly well. Examples of English and mathematics work from Years 3 and 5 show that some disadvantaged pupils are making rapid progress in their learning. In Year 5, for example, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics is now in line with others nationally. However, disadvantaged pupils do not currently make consistently rapid progress across reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups.
- We reviewed how effectively teaching supports all learners, especially the most able, to make rapid progress and achieve a greater depth of learning. In 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics was well below the national average. While this is in part because of the typically low starting points that pupils arrive at the school with, leaders have recognised the need to increase levels of challenge in lessons, so that pupils make more rapid progress.
- Leaders use staff training effectively to develop how well teachers plan learning opportunities that build on different pupils' prior knowledge and skills. Learning support assistants use questioning consistently well to probe pupils' understanding and help them to make progress. As a result, more pupils across the school are achieving a greater depth of learning, particularly in mathematics, although this remains a focus to develop further.
- During this inspection, we also looked at whether progress in mathematics for pupils across the school is now more rapid than in the past. In 2016, pupils completing key stage 2 made much less progress in mathematics than they did in reading and writing, and achieved well below the national average. Leaders identified that, in the past, pupils' learning in mathematics was less secure because they did not always understand the thinking behind the methods they used.
- Leaders and teachers have focused rightly on improving how effectively mathematics is taught across the school. Activities in lessons now provide rich opportunities to develop pupils' thinking and reasoning skills based around practical and real-life contexts. Pupils are challenged to explain their thinking and to solve problems. Consequently, their progress is accelerating, and a higher proportion are achieving at least age-related expectations in mathematics than was the case last year. At the present time, pupils are achieving higher standards in mathematics than they are in reading and writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they maintain their current focus on making teaching consistently as effective as the strongest in the school, so that all pupils make similarly rapid progress
- they check carefully and regularly the impact of their actions on the rates of progress that different groups of pupils make, so leaders can maximise the impact they have.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Moles
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Together with your head of schools, we visited each classroom to look at pupils' learning and talk to them about their work. I met with you, your head of schools, other staff, pupils and governors. I talked to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. Along with your English and mathematics leaders, I reviewed samples of work from pupils in Years 3 and 5. I considered the school's information about pupils' current attendance, exclusions and levels of achievement. I looked at a range of other school documents, including your self-evaluation and school improvement plan, the record of recruitment checks, the website, and various policies. I took into account 12 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire, including eight free-text responses, and talked to pupils and parents informally on the playground.