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Mrs Claire Lowe
Executive Principal
Blackfield Primary School
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Dear Mrs Lowe

Short inspection of Blackfield Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 September 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in October 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 have created a culture where all pupils are valued and cared for well. The school's 'INSPIRE' values – innovation, nurture, success, passion, integrity, responsibility and excellence – are embedded effectively into the engaging curriculum. In addition, the learning values complement these well and give pupils the strategies they need to be effective learners.

You have strengthened teaching by providing high-quality support for staff. Your innovative use of technology has led to significant improvements in teaching. For example, the videoing of lessons has enabled teachers to identify their strengths and the areas to improve. Staff value the useful training they have received, which they believe has improved how they teach reading, in particular. As a result, pupils across the school are making good progress.

The curriculum is a strength of the school and provides an exciting range of opportunities. Pupils are highly motivated by the engaging themes and are keen to learn. Their attitudes to learning are positive and behaviour is good.

When your predecessor school was inspected in October 2013, inspectors recognised its many strengths. Inspectors also identified a need for teachers to improve and increase the opportunities for pupils to engage in reading across the curriculum. Another recommendation was to ensure that pupils are actively and

independently involved in their own learning. Leaders have addressed these areas effectively so that:

- pupils now have many opportunities to develop their reading by using a wide range of high-quality texts across the curriculum
- pupils are now more actively engaged in lessons and have developed greater independence as learners.

You and the school's academy councillors have an ambitious vision for all pupils to achieve equally well, regardless of their prior attainment. Your systematic and analytical approach to identifying the school's development priorities has ensured that new strategies have been implemented effectively. The majority of pupils now make at least the rate of progress that the school expects. The proportion of pupils across the school attaining the expected standard in reading is increasing, as is the proportion reaching the higher standards. Teaching has improved, particularly in reading and mathematics. Teachers create practical opportunities for pupils to deepen their learning by applying their skills in different contexts.

You have correctly identified writing as an area to improve further, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The support the school gives these pupils needs to focus on their basic skills, such as spelling, to help them to catch up.

You also identified the need to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, many of whom were persistently absent from school. Persistent absence of those pupils entitled to free school meals has been high. Your effective action has ensured that the attendance of this group of pupils has improved.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are highly effective. Leaders keep detailed records and carefully track every concern raised by staff and all involvement with outside agencies. Pupils feel safe and happy in school. Parents are satisfied with how the school cares for their children. The school's curriculum ensures that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils know how to use the internet safely and have also learned about road safety. They behave sensibly in lessons and around the school. The good supervision by adults ensures that pupils are safe when playing outside at breaktimes.

Effective training ensures that staff are knowledgeable about all aspects of safeguarding, including the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Leaders make sure that safeguarding is always on the agenda and monitor safeguarding arrangements robustly. They take swift action to follow up on concerns raised by staff so that pupils are kept safe. The school works effectively with external agencies when necessary.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we agreed to focus on the following aspects: the effectiveness of leaders in relation to safeguarding; how well leaders have improved the teaching of reading, particularly in key stage 1; how effectively leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress across the curriculum; how the curriculum prepares pupils for their next steps in education and for life in modern Britain; and how well leaders are working with parents.
- Teachers' knowledge and skills have improved through high-quality training. This has led to improved teaching, particularly of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) and reading. For example, in key stage 1 pupils are taught to blend and segment using their phonics knowledge. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving the phonics screening check standard at the end of Year 1 is now above the national average. Additional support for disadvantaged pupils enabled many more pupils to achieve the expected standard in phonics. Other strategies, such as coaching and team-teaching, have led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching across the school.
- Improved approaches to the teaching of reading have raised attainment, particularly for disadvantaged pupils in key stages 1 and 2. Pupils now have access to high-quality texts across all subjects and are learning to read fluently. For example, in Year 6 pupils are pre-taught complex vocabulary, linked to their topic 'Harry Potter and the Phil'Oscars Stone'. This enables them to improve their comprehension of the text. Discovery centres and learning zones across the school encourage a love of reading.
- Leaders and academy councillors monitor pupils' learning rigorously. This enables them to quickly identify any pupil or groups of pupils who are at risk of falling behind, and take swift action to address this. For example, leaders carried out a comprehensive review of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This has led to improvements in the support pupils receive within lessons to enable them to develop greater confidence and independence. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities now make good progress in reading and mathematics. However, the progress these pupils make in writing is slower because of their weaker spelling skills.
- The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being. The school's values are embedded in the engaging topics. The curriculum is enriched by visits such as trips to 'Harry Potter World' and the Isle of Wight. These visits give pupils a practical context for their learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development opportunities are effectively built into the curriculum. At the beginning of term, pupils created class charters, focused on their responsibilities as citizens and learners. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education because attainment is now in line with or above the national average.

- Leaders across the school work well with parents. The parent support worker and the inclusion leader provide highly effective support for pupils and their families. For example, morning club helps pupils to settle into school each day and provides an opportunity for parents to share any concerns. Teachers organise informative curriculum workshops to help parents understand the school's strategies. Leaders organise forum meetings to gather parents' views, for example about homework and reading. Following feedback from parents, homework has been adapted and reading tips are now shared in newsletters. The academy council has set up a working party to improve communication with parents. This has resulted in the use of social media to communicate with parents and the inclusion of an audio version of the newsletter on the school's website. A few parents expressed concerns about how the school manages bullying and behaviour. Scrutiny of the school's records shows that behaviour is good and that incidents are managed well by staff. Pupils say that bullying rarely happens, but when it occurs teachers resolve problems quickly and well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are taught effective spelling strategies to enable them to make more rapid progress in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Mo Galway
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other leaders, pupils, members of the academy council and the school improvement adviser. Together with the principal, we visited all year groups. I reviewed a range of pupils' work with your director of teaching and learning and subject leaders. Parents' views were taken into account through the 93 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 55 free-text comments. I also spoke to a number of parents at the beginning of the school day. I observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes, in class and around the school. I reviewed a wide range of the school's documents including information about pupils' achievement and attendance, the school development plan and policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding. We also discussed the school's self-evaluation.