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Mrs Jill Griffin
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Griffin

Short inspection of Evington Valley 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 the school was judged to be good in December 2012.

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 provided strong leadership and communicated a clear vision which is understood and shared among all staff. You are ably supported by strong senior and middle leaders who are equally determined to improve the lives of pupils. You have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have ensured that detailed plans are in place to make the necessary improvements. Staff and governors understand where changes need to be made. They are fully committed to school improvement and are supportive of leaders in achieving their aims.

Governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Although several governors are new to their posts, there is a wide range of experience within the governing body which works collaboratively to support and challenge leaders. Governors are proactive in developing their own knowledge and understanding, for example in seeking advice and training opportunities where required. Governors have the skills to hold leaders to account and do so effectively.

You have created a culture where everyone matters. Throughout the school, there is a clear sense of collaboration and team spirit. The school is highly inclusive and pupils who have additional needs are very well supported by staff and other pupils. Pupils have a good understanding of diversity. They recognise others' beliefs and values and embrace these differences. They are extremely respectful.

Pupils are happy, confident and enjoy coming to school. They are enthusiastic about their learning and recognise that their teachers want them to do well. Pupils say that their teachers make learning fun. They are keen to succeed in all aspects of school life. You have ensured that pupils enjoy a range of activities to broaden and enrich their experiences. Pupils appreciate these opportunities which extend their knowledge and understanding of the world. For example, during the inspection, pupils were keen to describe their enjoyment of a recent visit to the Black Country Museum. Parents who made their views known are extremely positive about the school. They recognise that teachers have high expectations because they want their children to succeed.

The last inspection identified the need to further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by developing pupils' independence and ensuring that teachers were providing work that was appropriately challenging. You are addressing these aspects by ensuring that teachers plan activities which enhance pupils' resilience and independent learning skills. You have introduced a strategy for pupils to work together as 'learning partners', developing both their independence and determination to work things out for themselves. You worked with a group of pupils to develop a set of expectations of learning attitudes, designed around the school slogan of 'caring (concentration and cooperation, ask questions, reflect, imagination and improvement, never give up and go for it) and learning together'. Pupils are able to concentrate for extended periods without direct adult supervision. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were observed working collaboratively in small groups, enthusiastically sharing a reading activity and overcoming difficulties together. You have ensured that teachers are able to share good practice by planning together, developing a new approach to meeting the needs of individual pupils. Activities are planned to provide different levels of challenge, called 'hot, spicy and mild'. Pupils are encouraged to select an activity appropriate to their level of ability. This has ensured that many pupils are making faster progress. However, activities do not always stretch the most able pupils sufficiently. This means that they are not effectively supported to work towards achieving the higher standards, particularly in reading and mathematics.

A key priority has been to improve pupils' oracy. Considerable work has been undertaken to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills. Class teachers encourage discussion between pupils through the 'learning partners' approach and all staff consistently model fluency and eloquence in their language use. Staff take every opportunity to encourage pupils to practise their spoken language. For example, children in the early years were observed practising speaking in full sentences to respond to their teacher's questions in a parachute game activity. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are encouraged to develop their listening skills by 'tracking the speaker', supporting the development of their concentration skills alongside their oracy.

You have continued to prioritise improving pupils' attendance since the last inspection. You have communicated high expectations and frequently emphasise the importance of regular attendance, for example by explaining to parents the link between good attendance and pupils' achievement. You have been creative in

rewarding pupils and the families of those who attend regularly. Pupils understand the importance of regular attendance; as one 4-year-old said, 'You can't learn if you don't come to school.' The attendance officer works closely with families and external agencies to identify and overcome barriers to attending. As a result of this work, there has been an improvement in attendance; however, you recognise that there is further work to be done to ensure that all families understand their responsibilities in making sure that their children attend regularly.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding practices are effective. Records are detailed and fit for purpose. Staff understand their responsibilities and systems are robust and thorough. Staff are appropriately trained and receive regular updates. Leaders have ensured that staff are aware of risks that are pertinent to the local area. Systems and processes are followed robustly and leaders are tenacious in following up concerns, ensuring that the interests and well-being of pupils are placed at the heart of all they do.

Inspection findings

- Children in the early years setting make an excellent start to their life in school. Strong leadership and effective teaching support children to make very good progress. Progress is also very good in key stage 1 and the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 has been consistently higher than the national average in recent years. However, in 2017, progress in reading and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 dipped and pupils' outcomes were lower than expected. You carried out a detailed analysis of pupils' performance to identify the reasons for this and took immediate action to address the areas identified.
- You have reallocated leadership responsibilities to ensure that greater priority is given to the development of pupils' language and vocabulary and to their reading skills. Thus, two middle leaders now focus on oracy and reading development respectively. You have also introduced more thorough systems for monitoring pupils' progress in reading and mathematics and evaluating the impact of leaders' work in these areas. For example, regular pupil progress meetings take place, where leaders and class teachers work together to identify barriers to learning and implement strategies to support pupils to improve.
- Leaders have introduced a series of non-negotiables to improve the quality of teaching of reading and mathematics. For example, pupils now undertake daily mental mathematics and regular problem-solving activities. Considerable emphasis has been given to encouraging pupils to read more regularly and with specific targets. All pupils are expected to read daily at home, with very clear aims and purposes. Class teachers monitor the impact of this approach closely, and pupils respond well as a result.

- Since the last inspection, you have introduced a new reading programme which ensures that pupils read books that are appropriate to their reading ability. Pupils enjoy undertaking reading tests as part of this programme and are keen to progress to the next level of the programme. Teachers are able to ensure that pupils are being appropriately challenged in their reading materials.
- In addition to improving the teaching of reading, leaders have highlighted the importance of reading for pleasure. The library is a welcoming, vibrant space and displays around the school celebrate books and promote the joy of reading. Pupils say that they are encouraged to read and enjoy doing so. During the inspection, they were keen to share their experiences of reading and spoke about books with pleasure and excitement.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined has been consistently lower than the national average in recent years. The assessment policy includes a strategy to provide additional extension activities and to encourage pupils to reflect on and deepen their learning. This strategy is applied effectively in mathematics. Teachers apply the policy consistently, including planning activities for different abilities. However, activities intended for the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenging. Leaders are aware of the need to develop strategies to ensure that the most able pupils are fully stretched across the curriculum, and particularly in reading.
- In recent years, attendance, including for disadvantaged pupils, has been below the national average. Leaders have rightly prioritised this as an area in need of improvement. You have shared your high expectations with parents and have ensured that absences are checked and followed up carefully and tenaciously. You have taken a combined approach of challenge and support. Attendance is improving but it remains below the national average. This remains a key priority for the school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers routinely plan activities which challenge the most able pupils to support them to achieve the higher standards in reading and mathematics
- strategies already in place to improve attendance are further developed to support those who find it difficult to attend school regularly.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held meetings with senior leaders, other staff and governors. I also spoke by telephone with a representative from the local authority and reviewed reports about the school's work written by local authority officers. I spoke to parents before school and also considered the 12 responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, the eight free-text responses and the 149 responses to a survey of parents' views conducted by the school. I met formally with a group of pupils and spoke to pupils in their lessons. I considered the results of a pupil survey conducted by the school. I listened to a small group of pupils read. I looked at pupils' work in their lessons and at a sample of work across different year groups and abilities. I visited classes with senior leaders and observed pupils' learning. I scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans, monitoring documents and records relating to safeguarding. I also viewed the information on the school's website.