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Mrs Jan Lonsdale
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lonsdale

Short inspection of Sefton Park Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 10 October 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. In this time, there have been several staff changes, including at senior leadership level. With support from a strategically effective governing body, you have managed these well. Consequently, the school has a skilled and ambitious leadership team with a wide breadth of knowledge and experience. Together, you are driving forward the school's journey of improvement. During my visit, leaders demonstrated a detailed knowledge of the school's priorities and could discuss in precise detail the actions they are taking in addressing these.

Leaders have established a curriculum which is engaging, exciting and highly effective in developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Cross-curricular links are imaginative and the curriculum makes full use of the school environment. One example of this is the building of an Anglo-Saxon roundhouse in the grounds.

Sefton Park Junior School is clearly a school which puts children at the heart of its work. Leaders display a strong understanding of the needs of pupils and their families. The drive for high academic standards is underpinned by well-targeted pastoral support. This is reducing barriers to pupils' learning and helps ensure that pupils make the progress they should. This support is appreciated by parents. Nearly all parents who responded to the online questionnaire would recommend the school. One parent wrote, 'Sefton Park has helped my child not only develop academically but also emotionally', while another stated: 'The school is a fantastic place of learning. It is dynamic and exciting and encourages our children to make

risks with their learning in a fun, safe environment.’ These comments typified the views of many.

The previous inspection identified the need for teachers to fully develop pupils’ writing skills across a range of subjects. Leaders have tackled this effectively and, in 2017, a higher proportion of pupils than is found nationally were assessed as writing at greater depth at the end of Year 6. Pupils’ writing books from across the school demonstrate teachers’ high expectations. Pupils clearly enjoy the opportunities to write for a variety of audiences. This has given their writing a sense of purpose and pupils have risen to the challenge, for example with their ‘What Makes Bristol Brilliant’ information leaflets, which are being distributed by local estate agents.

At the start of my visit, the school’s website did not meet the statutory requirements for what maintained schools must publish online. This was rectified by the end of the inspection. Governors recognise the need to monitor their website regularly to ensure continued compliance.

Safeguarding is effective.

Alongside the designated safeguarding lead and other leaders, you have ensured that there is a secure culture of safeguarding in the school. This is based on a shared belief that everyone has a responsibility to ensure that children are kept safe. Policies and procedures are robust and understood by staff and pupils. One example of these is the green and red lanyard system.

Checks made to ensure that all staff, governors and volunteers are safe to work with children are thorough and appropriately documented. Some clerical errors were found in the school’s single central register. These did not pose a risk to children’s safety and were rectified immediately. The designated safeguarding lead ensures that all staff are trained in line with the latest statutory guidance. Through questionnaires, audits and discussions with pupils and staff, leaders and governors check the impact of training to ensure that the culture of safeguarding is strong across the school.

School leaders place a high priority on securing pupils’ well-being and readiness to learn. They intervene swiftly with bespoke support if pupils are troubled. Leaders engage effectively with outside agencies when they have concerns that a child might be at risk and are active in seeking advice from other professionals. Leaders have established strong links with parents to share any concerns around the safety or welfare of vulnerable pupils.

Pupils feel safe in school. They say that bullying rarely happens, but if it does, they are confident that it would be dealt with appropriately by any adult in school. Nearly all parents who responded to Ofsted’s online questionnaire felt that their children are safe in school. One parent expressed a widely held view when writing, ‘The school has such a caring ethos with the children placed firmly at the centre.’

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the main areas we would focus on. First, we looked at how leaders are monitoring pupils' outcomes to ensure that, in all year groups, pupils make strong progress from their starting points at the beginning of Year 3. Results in last year's national assessments for pupils at the end of key stage 2 had highlighted a dip in the rates of progress made in reading, writing and mathematics. This was when compared to very strong outcomes the previous year.
- Leaders responded quickly and carried out an in-depth analysis of pupils' outcomes. A new tracking system has been introduced to keep track of the progress pupils make more accurately. Staff have been trained to ensure that teacher assessments reflect pupils' attainment against national curriculum objectives. Assessment information is also moderated to ensure consistency across the school. Pupils identified as falling behind are identified quickly. They are given precise interventions to address any gaps in understanding or remove any barriers to their progress.
- In the 2017 national tests at the end of Year 6, a small number of middle prior-attaining girls had not made strong progress from their key stage 1 starting points. Therefore, our second line of enquiry was to explore the reasons for this as well as the impact of leaders' actions in supporting the mathematical development of girls currently in the school.
- This area has already been identified as a priority by the school and is a key focus in the school's plan for further improvement. Leaders have skilfully combined published research with their knowledge of the school's pupils to gain a clear understanding of the factors affecting girls' mathematical development. Interventions, including one-to-one support, small-group work and precise input by class teachers, have been effective in addressing pupils' needs. My conversations with girls showed that they appreciate the support they are receiving. They can explain how teachers are helping them improve their understanding of mathematics. As a result of the school's actions, they feel more confident about their mathematics and are more willing to take risks in their learning.
- Inspection activities show that all groups of pupils currently in the school, including girls, are making strong progress from their starting points. However, leaders recognise that pupils' recorded learning does not consistently reflect the high expectations they have set out within school policies. Consequently, when undertaking their own monitoring, the limited evidence available to leaders is impeding their ability to identify precisely the impact teachers' actions are having on pupils' outcomes.
- At the start of the inspection, the information available on the school's website regarding planned expenditure of pupil premium funding was not in line with statutory requirements. Therefore, my next line of enquiry was to examine leaders' rationale for the plan and how they expected their planned actions to have a positive impact upon the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

- The deputy headteacher has a secure understanding of the barriers facing pupils eligible for additional funding. He carefully considers the needs of individual pupils before putting in place bespoke packages of support. The impact of interventions is monitored at regular intervals with amendments made as necessary. As a result of a programme of precise targets, focused on need, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils is at least in line with, and often above, that made by other pupils nationally. By the end of the inspection, information about the school's provision was appropriately documented on the website.
- Our final line of enquiry was regarding leaders' actions to improve the attendance of all pupils and, in particular, the school's most vulnerable learners. The school's inclusion manager continues to work closely with parents and external agencies to provide the support needed to get pupils into school regularly. However, although absence rates and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent are reducing, they remain above the national average. Leaders and governors recognise that there is more work to do in this area.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in line with school policy, the quality of pupils' recorded learning in mathematics evidences the strong progress they are making towards greater depth and how they are developing their fluency and reasoning skills
- attendance continues to rise for all pupils, particularly the school's most vulnerable pupils
- the website is monitored regularly so it meets statutory requirements for what schools must publish online.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Dyer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other members of your senior leadership team. We discussed the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress and improvements made since the previous inspection. Together with the assistant headteacher, I observed pupils in classrooms and spoke to them about their learning. Work in pupils' books from across the curriculum was analysed.

I had meetings with senior leaders and five governors, including the chair of governors. I looked at a range of written evidence, including documents relating to

safeguarding and attendance. I took account of the views expressed by 73 parents who completed the online survey as well as their written comments. I also considered the views of staff and pupils who returned their questionnaires.