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Mrs Anna Webb
Headteacher
Newbridge Junior School
New Road
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Dear Mrs Webb

Short inspection of Newbridge Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 31 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since your appointment as headteacher, following the school's conversion to academy status, you, ably supported by a strong leadership team, have managed a period of significant change. This has included a significant rise in pupil numbers and the opening of new accommodation for Year 6 pupils on a separate site. During this time, you, the leadership team and governors have risen to these challenges, notably ensuring that both school sites, despite their distance apart, are still seen as one school. You have ensured that pupils are given plenty of opportunities to come together through shared activities to secure the ethos and identity of the school.

As headteacher, you provide clear leadership and vision which are recognised and highly valued by staff and the regional governing body. You are very ambitious for the pupils in your care and are passionate to ensure that all pupils achieve the best they can. Teaching staff hold you in high regard; they feel trusted and appreciate that you allow them to take risks and be innovative in their planning and delivery of the curriculum. Staff welcome the chance to develop their skills under your leadership. Through carefully tailored professional development programmes, many staff who join as newly qualified teachers progress to become leaders within the school. This continuity in staffing ensures a positive impact on improvements in teaching and learning.

Pupils enjoy school and the majority attend regularly. They talk enthusiastically

about the work they do at school and the range of activities they undertake. They particularly enjoy topics where visitors to the school, or visits to places such as Paultons Park, fire their enthusiasm for the subjects studied. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is below that seen nationally.

Governors know the school well. They are kept well informed through regular visits to the school, meetings with subject leaders and via detailed assessment information. They are effective in holding leaders to account for the performance of the school. For example, governors recently evaluated the use of funding for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that it was being used effectively.

You have addressed the areas for improvement that inspectors identified at the last inspection. Pupils now have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and talk knowledgeably about their next steps to success. In addition, you have acted on the previous inspection issue of raising the attainment of boys in English. As a result of changes to the way both reading and writing sessions are delivered, boys are now achieving at least as well as girls. Attainment levels have risen over the past three years and in 2017 75% of boys reached the expected standard in reading and 77% in writing, which is above the national average for all pupils. A further area for improvement from the previous inspection was to improve the phonic knowledge of pupils. Guided-reading sessions have been used to support pupils' understanding of phonics. This has had a positive impact on both progress and outcomes as seen in workbooks, in-school data and national test results.

You and other leaders, including governors, have identified that the progress made by the most able and most-able disadvantaged pupils, particularly in writing, is not rapid enough. You have started to address this issue.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, that there is a strong culture of vigilance and records are well maintained and detailed. All staff receive comprehensive safeguarding training ensuring they know what to do should they be worried about a pupil. Safeguarding is on the agenda of all staff meetings and the safeguarding lead for the academy regularly emails every staff member with the latest updates. Governors monitor carefully the school's safeguarding work, for example through the completion of audits of the single central register and the appropriate safeguarding training of new members of staff.

Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. This includes when working online. For example, members of the school council spoke confidently about how they should never share passwords and how they would tell an adult if they are worried about any online content. Pupils speak positively about the school. They describe the staff as caring and are confident about speaking to them if they have any concerns. A group of pupils assured me that if they were having problems 'a member of staff would sort it out

in a matter of seconds'. Parents agreed that their children are happy, safe, and well looked after in school.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked closely at specific aspects of the school's provision, including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; pupils' progress, particularly in writing; pupils' outcomes, particularly those of key groups, including the disadvantaged and the most able disadvantaged; and pupils' attendance.
- Leaders have correctly identified that pupils were not making sufficient progress in writing. As a result, leaders have introduced a curriculum which has purposeful writing activities threaded throughout. Each half-termly topic starts with a 'hook' to capture pupils' interest and ends with a presentation to parents, other year groups or invited guests, such as the Mayor of Portsmouth. All pupils, but particularly boys, have responded positively to this approach to writing. Pupils are given many opportunities to write for a variety of purposes. The impact of this can be seen in workbooks, where writing is of appropriate length and is well sustained, with appropriate features and devices. As a result of these changes, both in-school tracking and work in books show that pupils are now making rapid progress in writing.
- Leaders and governors have identified that progress in writing of the most able and most-able disadvantaged, although improving, is not rapid enough. As a consequence, they have introduced focused writing sessions for the most able groups. In addition, one-to-one conferencing sessions help pupils focus on applying the skills and knowledge needed to demonstrate increased sophistication in their writing. This is having a positive impact on the progress of this group of pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Careful identification of the individual needs of these pupils and robust tracking of their progress ensure that no pupil falls behind. Outcomes for these pupils have been rising. In 2017, unvalidated assessment information showed that the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with the national average. In both mathematics and writing, the proportion of these pupils achieving the expected level was above the national average.
- Leaders have been relentless in their quest to improve attendance. A range of reward systems have been introduced. Furthermore, pupils receive termly sessions on why attendance in school is important and parents receive a twice-yearly attendance newsletter. As a result, pupils' attendance has risen for the past three years. Nevertheless, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities remains slightly below the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or

disabilities continues to improve so that these pupils are in school as regularly as other pupils

- pupils' progress in writing continues to improve rapidly, ensuring that the most able and most-able disadvantaged reach the higher standard at the end of key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Macdonald
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and your deputy to discuss the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement. I held discussions with subject leaders and members of the regional governing body. Together, we observed learning in every year group. We talked to pupils about their learning and looked at their books. I talked to pupils at playtime about their school and met with the school council. I looked at the school's documentation relating to governance, pupils' progress and attainment, and safeguarding. I met with parents before school and considered 12 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, including 12 free-text comments. I considered 88 responses to the online pupil survey and 48 responses to the staff survey.