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Mrs Angela Smith
Headteacher
Priory Park Infant School & Playgroup
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Priory Park Infant School & Playgroup

Following my visit to the school on 15 November 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 July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You are an aspirational and reflective leader who is always looking for ways to improve the school. You have built up a dedicated leadership team that plays a full part in school improvement. Together you have developed a calm and purposeful ethos with high expectations regarding pupils' well-being and academic achievements. You have ensured that high-quality professional development and the sharing of best practice with local schools have supported improvement in the skills of teachers and teaching assistants. Consequently, most pupils make good progress from their starting points.

In 2016 and 2017, standards at the end of Year 2 were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining greater depth is a strength of the school. We saw evidence of pupils working at a high standard when applying their mathematical knowledge to solve difficult problems. Additionally, we saw pupils writing complex sentences with a wide range of vocabulary during literacy and cross-curricular activities. This indicates that the issue regarding writing at the previous inspection has been rectified. Pupils are well prepared for the transition to their junior school.

Governors have an accurate view of what is working well and what could be improved. They hold you to account effectively for pupils' outcomes, and teaching,

learning and assessment. Recently, you and your governors have taken over the governance of the playgroup.

You have ensured that the new playgroup accommodation is stimulating and fit for purpose. Everyone is dedicated to making the integration of the playgroup into the school community as smooth a process as possible. Your aim is to improve teaching and learning so that the children enter Reception with a better understanding of reading, writing and number.

Your pupils are proud of their school. They behave well in lessons, show respect to each other and contribute to the welcoming ethos. Pupils speak highly of their friendships within school. Parents are extremely supportive about the school. The vast majority who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, indicated that their child is happy, makes good progress and is taught well. Reception parents value the school's use of technology to see what their child has been learning during the day. Year 1 parents working with their children during a 'look and learn' session told me, 'It is useful to see how our children learn so that we can follow that through at home.' A typical parent statement on the text review stated 'the overall ethos of the school enables the children to flourish' and 'a big bonus is 'forest school' which is a wonderful experience for the children'.

The mark of your strong leadership is that you are never complacent and correctly recognise the areas that require further improvement. You acknowledge that more disadvantaged pupils consistently need to reach the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a very strong culture of safeguarding within the school. Records are detailed and of a high quality. You and your governors have ensured that the playgroup staff are now part of the school's single central register and that the playgroup's welfare requirements are well met. Risk assessments for 'forest school' activities are meticulous. I observed a group of pupils walking safely and sensibly to the nearby site in appropriate clothing.

Staff and governors have appropriate training to help them understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. You all place a high priority on keeping pupils safe and providing strong pastoral care for them. The school's family support worker helps vulnerable families effectively.

Pupils stated that they feel safe in school, knowing that adults will help them if they have any worries. Parents agreed that their children are safe within school. Key stage 1 pupils discussed enthusiastically how to stay safe within school and the wider community.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to investigate whether the high standards achieved in 2016 were maintained in 2017, and if pupils continued to make good progress.
- The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year in 2017 was again above the national average. Electronic evidence and children's written work indicate that they continued to make good progress from their starting points.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved continuously for the past three years and has risen above national figures. We saw pupils using their knowledge of phonics effectively in the Reception and key stage 1 classes to support their literacy work.
- The high standards pupils achieved in 2016 at the end of Year 2 were sustained in 2017. Again, a greater proportion of pupils reached the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics than those nationally. Particular strengths were the proportion of pupils reaching greater depth, which had improved in all three subjects. The school's evidence and work in pupils' books indicate that current pupils continue to make at least good progress across key stage 1.
- My second line of enquiry was to check how leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make good progress and attend well. This is because, in 2016, disadvantaged pupils did less well than others nationally and there were few pupils who had SEN and/or disabilities in Year 2. Additionally, disadvantaged pupils had a high rate of absence, in the highest 10% nationally.
- Your leaders responded swiftly and appropriately to these issues. All pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are well provided for through a wealth of interventions which meet pupils' needs. Additional one-to-one support or well-considered small-group work, either within or out of the classroom, are improving pupils' confidence and understanding. The use of pupils' personalised 'speech bubbles' has been particularly effective in ensuring that leaders, teachers and teaching assistants know which areas of learning pupils have been focusing on. As a result, teachers can quickly assess if pupils are using their newly acquired skills to improve work in class.
- The special educational needs coordinator and the pupil premium leader work diligently to ensure that the progress of these pupils is carefully checked so that they receive appropriate targeted support. This enables pupils to make the best possible progress from their starting points. Leaders and governors ensure that the pupil premium and special educational needs funding are spent wisely to improve the provision and pupils' outcomes for these two groups of pupils.
- In 2017, differences diminished between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally at the expected standard. However, you are aware that these differences still need to diminish further across the school. Nevertheless, disadvantaged pupils did better in reading and mathematics than others nationally at greater depth.
- Attendance is given a high priority. A wide range of appropriate measures ensure

that attendance is improving this current academic year for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. You and your staff, including the family support worker, help parents to increase their child's attendance. The celebration of weekly attendance for each class highlights your focus on improving this area of the school's work.

- My next line of enquiry was to consider the quality of provision in the early years and how you and your governors are integrating the recently acquired playgroup into the school community.
- You, the early years leader and the playgroup manager have ensured that the provision in the new playgroup accommodation is stimulating and well resourced and meets welfare requirements. Staff from the playgroup and the Reception classes are beginning to work well together and share good practice.
- Both settings have stimulating inside and outside learning activities. Children play and work well together with effective support from trained adults. We saw some Reception children using their knowledge of phonics to support their spelling, while others worked independently making musical shakers to use in their role play. In the playgroup, staff ensured that children ate their lunch with good table manners, while informing them about the food they were eating.
- The performance management of teaching staff was an area for improvement at the last separate inspections for both the school and the playgroup. I wanted to investigate if a more efficient system was now in place to support further improvements in teaching and learning and pupils' outcomes. You and your governors have ensured that this is the case. Staff are held more accountable for their roles and the progress that all groups of pupils make. Specific targets, good-quality training and the collection of robust evidence are clearly linked to priorities in the whole-school development plan to support further school improvement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the playgroup and school staff work as one team to improve teaching, learning and assessment to enable pupils to enter Reception with a better understanding of reading, writing and number
- disadvantaged pupils continue to make the best possible progress in reading, writing and mathematics to diminish any differences with others nationally and across the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cambridgeshire. This letter

will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Harrison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other leaders, governors, a representative from the local authority and the school's external consultant. I spoke with a group of pupils.

I looked at a range of documentation, including information about the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement. I examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks.

I visited the playgroup and all classrooms within the school to observe learning and scrutinised the work in pupils' books.

The views of 100 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey were taken into account, as well as parental views from the free-text service.