

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



22 February 2018

Mrs Lisa Massey
Headteacher
Knebworth Primary and Nursery School
Swangleys Lane
Knebworth
Hertfordshire
SG3 6AA

Dear Mrs Massey

Short inspection of Knebworth Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2018, 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You have established a confident and knowledgeable leadership team that leads the school well. Leaders all care passionately about the pupils in the school and are proud of the pupils' achievements. Staff know the pupils very well and are now setting higher expectations for them. This is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. There is an urgency and determination from the whole team to do better for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils.

You have clear aims to move the school forward and have accurately identified the priorities for improvement. Your systems and processes ensure that these priorities are swiftly addressed. As a result, leaders and governors work effectively towards the same goals, and pupils' progress has accelerated in most subjects.

Children get off to a good start in early years. Staff are focused on the needs of individual children, and evidence in children's books and the school's current assessment information demonstrate that children are making good progress from their different starting points. You have taken effective action to improve the outdoor learning opportunities for children, which was an area for development from the previous inspection. Staff now provide a learning environment that is rich in opportunities to develop children's early reading, writing and number skills. This creative and purposeful environment also engages boys in their learning and as a result, previous differences in their attainment and that of girls are being successfully reduced.

Most parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, are happy with the school. In particular, parents appreciate the information teachers provide which enables them to support their children with learning at home. For example, the online information provided by staff is helping parents to increase their expectations of what their children can achieve. Staff are currently extending this support to early years so that parents with younger children can see more easily what their children are learning and support them further at home.

In my discussions with parents, it was clear that they value the support that the school provides for their children, not only academically but also in terms of their children's personal development and well-being. However, some parents have mixed feelings about the way leaders communicate the work being done to further improve the school. Parents would like to receive more information on this so that they can support the school further in achieving its aims. This is currently an improvement focus for the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors ensure that appropriately rigorous checks are carried out on all adults in the school to make sure that they are suitable to work with children. Staff are well trained in child protection and safeguarding issues.

The support given to vulnerable pupils and their families is a strength of the school. All adults work well together to prioritise the needs of these pupils to ensure that they are happy and safe and make progress with their learning. This includes working with other agencies as well as effective day-to-day support from the strong pastoral team.

Pupils and their families spoke very positively about the support they receive. Parents appreciate that staff are always 'there for them'.

Inspection findings

- One of the lines of enquiry I explored to check whether the school remains good was how effectively phonics is taught and whether pupils make good enough progress in this area from their starting points. Published results show that the proportion of pupils that reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has been declining over the last three years.
- During my visits to lessons and discussions with your leaders, it was clear that pupils are supported well to make strong progress in their phonics skills, including a small group of pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 who had not met the standard in Year 2. Teachers track pupils' progress closely and this enables them to address any underachievement quickly and put focused support in place. As a result, pupils' attainment in phonics has improved and the school's assessment information indicates that a higher proportion of pupils are expected to achieve the national standard.

- I also considered the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and how leaders are ensuring that these pupils make strong progress across subjects. This is because published assessment information for the last three years shows that these pupils did not achieve as well as other pupils in the school.
- Leaders, including governors, view the achievement and well-being of disadvantaged pupils in the school as a high priority. Leaders quickly and effectively identify any barriers to learning. Additional government funding is used to organise personalised extra help in lessons according to the pupils' individual needs. Consequently, the small number of disadvantaged pupils are making good progress from their various starting points. However, you recognise that disadvantaged pupils need to achieve better in mathematics.
- Another line of enquiry focused on how teachers plan and teach mathematics to ensure that all pupils make rapid progress. This is because published assessment information shows that pupils do not attain as well in mathematics as they do in other subjects.
- You and your leaders have rightly identified this as a whole-school priority. You have effectively used the local authority and external consultants to train and support staff to improve mathematics outcomes for all pupils. Consequently, teachers are now challenging pupils to solve a range of mathematical problems.
- Work in pupils' books and the comments pupils made to me demonstrate that they are making good progress in mathematics. Pupils told me that they like the mathematical challenges they are given and that they have to think hard about what they already know in order to successfully solve them. However, within this positive and improving picture, disadvantaged pupils do not always attain as highly as they should. You acknowledge that more work needs to be done to ensure that this happens consistently.
- Finally, I considered how well pupils are supported and encouraged to attend school. This line of enquiry arose from historical information showing that not all pupils attended school as often as they should. I looked at rates of attendance and, specifically, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Previously, these pupils have had particularly high rates of absence, including persistent absence.
- You and your governors have worked hard to raise the attendance of pupils. This has included a focus on rewarding good attendance alongside individualised support for families when needed, to encourage better attendance. This has reduced the large number of pupils in the previous year who had low attendance. As a result, attendance across the school, including for disadvantaged pupils, is improving and moving closer to national averages.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should:

- continue to promote positive shared working relationships with parents to enable parents to feel informed about their children's education and the work of the school
- ensure that further improvements are made to the teaching of mathematics so

that a greater number of disadvantaged pupils reach the higher standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Debbie Rogan
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

You, your deputy headteacher and I discussed the lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement, and information about current pupils' progress and attainment.

Meetings were held with you, senior leaders and a group of your governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with the school's local authority improvement adviser to discuss her work with the school.

I gathered a range of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included joint observations, with you and your leaders, of teaching and learning in classes. We looked at a sample of pupils' current work across all subjects and across a wide range of abilities.

I spoke informally to a number of pupils in classrooms about their learning, and met more formally with a group of pupils to talk about their school experience.

Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff and case studies about referrals made to external agencies.

The views of 95 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, as well as the 95 responses parents made using the free-text service. I took into account my discussions with parents during the inspection. I also considered the 16 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.