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Mrs Helen Mooney
Carlton Vale Infant School
Malvern Place
Kilburn
London
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Dear Mrs Mooney

Short inspection of Carlton Vale Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 27 February 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 January 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 and your staff continue to make sure that pupils make strong academic progress from when they join the school. You provide pupils with a range of enrichment opportunities that make a positive contribution to their personal development and welfare. The school has a caring and inclusive environment supporting effectively pupils and their families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. You and your leadership team are implementing initiatives to support pupils' emotional and mental well-being. You arranged staff training on how to support pupils' emotional and physical needs and on how to help them develop resilience, for example. These initiatives help pupils to feel safe and develop self-confidence.

Since the last inspection, reading outcomes at the end of Reception and Year 2 have improved. Teachers and other adults challenge pupils more, especially the most able, by asking them questions to deepen their comprehension, for instance. In the 2017 Year 2 tests, the proportion of pupils reaching greater depth in all subjects increased and was similar to national averages. This represents above-average progress.

Whereas staffing has remained stable in the early years, there have been some changes this year at key stage 1. You have correctly identified that some of the new members of staff continue to need more training and support to improve their effectiveness. You have also made it a priority to continue your work to engage

parents. You are focusing especially on the hard-to-reach parents so that they can better support their children's learning and ensure that they attend school regularly.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of vigilance at the school. Leaders and governors are well aware of the potential safeguarding and welfare issues in the school and the local community. The designated safeguarding leader makes sure that all members of staff have regular training and weekly updates. Members of staff are alert, know how to identify any signs that raise concerns and report them. The chair of the governing body liaises often with the safeguarding leader to make sure that the school deals effectively with all safeguarding and welfare issues.

School leaders work closely with a variety of external agencies to support pupils and their families in ensuring their safety and well-being. Leaders and governors diligently follow up should they feel agencies are not responding quickly enough.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They learn about internet safety, for instance, and the strategy devised by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to help them understand inappropriate touching. Leaders deliver termly safeguarding training sessions for parents. They also make available, on their website, useful information for parents.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a very high quality.

Inspection findings

- Although they remain above national averages for primary schools, rates of pupils' absence and persistent absence have reduced over time. Leaders have deployed a range of successful strategies to improve attendance. They analyse attendance information with greater rigour. Leaders alert parents as soon as their children's attendance begins to fall. If it continues to decline, leaders work with parents and other agencies to help them overcome any barriers to bringing their children to school regularly. In cases of known vulnerable families, for instance, senior leaders pay a home visit to identify how they can help to bring the pupil to school.
- Leaders celebrate and acknowledge improved attendance by writing to parents to encourage them to keep up the improvements. Leaders introduced a raft of rewards for best class and individual attendance. This motivates pupils and encourages them to ask their parents to bring them in. In 2017, nine pupils were persistently absent. This year the number has reduced to four. This demonstrates a sustained improvement. The current overall attendance rate from September to date, however, is similar to last year's figure.
- In 2017, in Year 2, about one in three pupils spoke English as their first language. In the end-of-key-stage tests, this group's performance in reading, writing, mathematics and science was well below their peers for whom English is an additional language. I explored why this was the case and what leaders are

doing to narrow these differences for current pupils. Governors had also challenged senior leaders on this point.

- Leaders provided evidence to show that this was a cohort-specific situation and not a common pattern. Senior and subject leaders know each of the pupils and their family situations well. They analyse progress information regularly and use it to identify pupils who are falling behind. The majority of the 2017 Year 2 pupils with English as a first language were pupils who also have special educational needs (SEN) and /or disabilities or had significant pastoral barriers that slowed their progress. They all received extra support during the year, without which their standards would have been lower. In the current Years 1 and 2 there are a very small and statistically insignificant proportion of pupils who speak English as a first language. I sampled their work with school leaders and compared it with the work of pupils, of a similar ability, for whom English is an additional language. There is no discernible difference between the two groups in terms of their progress and the standard of their work.
- I discussed with leaders how effectively they are making sure that pupils develop secure early reading skills, especially phonics. Reading outcomes since the previous inspection have improved. Leaders have developed and implemented effective additional support for all groups of pupils, including the most able. As a result, in 2017, from their low starting points, the proportion of children reaching the expected standard at the end of Reception was above average. In the Year 2 reading tests, above-average proportions of pupils met the expected standard and greater depth. On the other hand, the proportion of Year 1 pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics screening check continued to be below average and was the lowest in three years.
- Over 10% of the 2017 Year 1 cohort joined the school mid-year, with limited knowledge of English. This was a higher than usual proportion of late joiners. They were unable to catch up in a short space of time to meet the expected standard. Leaders have made sure that those pupils are getting extra support in Year 2. In reading with pupils, I was able to confirm the school's view that those pupils are now applying their phonic knowledge well and reading competently. Leaders have put in extra support earlier this year to help current Year 1 pupils who are falling behind. Since January, they are withdrawn from lessons to get an additional daily 30 minutes of support.
- Senior leaders correctly identified that the teaching of phonics in Year 1 this year is not effective enough. It is not leading to all groups of pupils making the strong and sustained progress of which they are capable. Leaders are, nevertheless, confident that a higher proportion of pupils will reach the expected standard this year. This will be largely down to the effective additional support. While pupils benefit from the extra help in phonics, they miss substantial amounts of other learning that is taking place in their classes.
- The Year 1 and Year 2 most able readers with whom I read are fluent and have good comprehension skills. The texts that they had been given by their teachers, however, were too easy and therefore not challenging enough.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of class phonics teaching in Year 1 improves so that there is a reduced need to rely on extra support to get pupils to the expected standard
- teachers give pupils reading books that are sufficiently challenging, especially the most able
- they continue to build on their work with parents so that even more parents make sure that their children 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 Brent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Radomsky
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector carried out the following activities during the inspection: meetings with senior leaders, the leaders of literacy, mathematics and science, and attendance as well as the chair of the governing body and three other governors; joint visits to classrooms with the headteacher and a scrutiny of pupils' work with subject leaders; observation of a reading support group and hearing pupils read; scrutinising a range of documentation, information about outcomes for groups of pupils, policy documentation, attendance records and information about safeguarding.

The inspector took into account the 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the 13 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.