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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Ms Debbie Wiles
Headteacher
Gilbert Colvin Primary School
Strafford Avenue
Ilford
Essex
IG5 0TL

Dear Ms Wiles

Short inspection of Gilbert Colvin Primary 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This has been achieved through your hard work in building a leadership team that is cohesive and sharply focused on pupil outcomes and in maintaining standards in the school. Since your last inspection, I noted the marked improvement in the development of your middle leaders and that they have had ongoing training and development in the subject areas they lead. In addition, there has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching and learning over time. As a result, pupils access a broad and balanced curriculum.

Parents, carers and pupils all feel that the school continues to deliver a good education to the community it serves. Parents are very supportive of the school. They appreciate how 'friendly and easy to approach' teachers are and how well they support their children. They stated that there is good support for pupils to help them to improve their learning. Leaders acknowledge that there is some more work to be done to ensure that all pupils make strong progress, particularly those who are disadvantaged.

School leaders and staff have worked hard to diminish the differences in attainment between girls and boys in reading, writing and mathematics. This is evident in the school's new curriculum that you have introduced. It engages boys better than in the past in learning and supports teachers in delivering engaging and exciting learning. You have rightly invested in high-quality reading texts that motivate boys to read more widely. Pupils' work in class topic books shows this innovative and exciting, broad and balanced curriculum and how well the wide range of curricular opportunities inspires pupils' learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. You, your senior leaders and governors fulfil your statutory duties well to ensure that pupils are protected from harm and danger. For example, there are thorough systems to check the suitability of staff before they are appointed. You ensure that training is up to date and staff are familiar with the most recent statutory guidance. This includes coverage of national and local priorities such as extremism and child sexual exploitation. As a result, staff understand their responsibilities and carry them out extremely well.

Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding liaise closely with families and other external agencies when pupils are potentially at risk of harm. Your safeguarding culture in the school is captured by the mantra echoed by all staff: 'We care about the child and the family.' Leaders ensure that pupils and families quickly access services offering early help.

Parents and pupils are confident that the school is a safe place. Pupils know the staff they can turn to if they are worried. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep safe at school and out of school because the curriculum covers a range of age-appropriate topics.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed three key lines of enquiry. My first line of enquiry focused on pupils' attendance. In particular, we looked at your work to improve the attendance of pupils who are frequently absent from school. Rates of persistent absence are higher than for other schools nationally.
- Staff monitor attendance carefully and know the reasons for pupils' absences. It is clear that the school is sensitive to the needs of pupils who are unwell and have medical appointments, which account for the majority of absences. The school has put strategies in place to work with pupils and families. Leaders have raised the profile of the importance of good attendance, for example through the 'attendance rockets competition'. Where necessary, you take legal action to ensure that parents send their children to school regularly.

- Persistent absence is still relatively high. Your actions have led to some improvements, and leaders are determined to reduce persistent absence rates even further.
- The second line of enquiry was about the actions taken by the school to improve teaching and learning in phonics. In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics by the end of Years 1 and 2 was below the national average.
- You used your detailed evaluation of these outcomes to identify key priorities for improvement. You now check children's knowledge of letters and the sounds they represent within their first term at school. This helps teachers to provide targeted support that is linked to individual pupils' needs. Leaders provide a consistent approach to developing early reading in key stage 1 and give guidance to staff on effective phonics teaching.
- Your actions are starting to have a positive impact. Staff understand the barriers to pupils achieving well in phonics and know what strategies are most effective. Extra tuition and additional support for selected pupils are working very well to help them catch up.
- The third line of enquiry considered the progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly in key stage 2. In 2017, disadvantaged pupils' progress in reading and mathematics was in line with national averages. However, overall progress for Year 6 pupils was significantly above average in these subjects.
- Leaders have evaluated the use the school makes of pupil premium funding and put in place strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. This is especially effective in Year 6 where staff know the pupils well and provide bespoke additional support for disadvantaged pupils. For example, you have introduced new texts in reading and helped pupils to analyse writers' use of language. Different approaches to teaching mathematics are also helping pupils to deepen their learning.
- You and your leaders have begun to diminish the differences between disadvantaged pupils and those of their peers in Year 6. However, this is not consistent across the school. You acknowledge that more focused provision for disadvantaged pupils is needed in other year groups for those pupils to make at least good or better progress in line with that of their peers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the effective strategies to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 are implemented across all year groups
- the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent reduces so that attendance rates are in line with or better than the national average.

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

Yours sincerely

Lando Du Plooy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held a number of meetings with you and other senior leaders. You and other senior leaders accompanied me on a series of short visits to lessons. I held a group discussion with three middle leaders with responsibilities for the curriculum, literacy, mathematics, school improvement and phonics. I also held a meeting with you and the family liaison officer. I met with a representative of the governing body and held a meeting with the school improvement adviser from the local authority. I spoke to pupils in lessons, scrutinised their books with senior and middle leaders and met with members of the school council. I looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation and summary improvement plans, external reviews of the school's work, minutes of governors' meetings, records of pupils' attainment, progress and behaviour, evidence of records to keep pupils safe and attendance information. I took into consideration 20 responses to Parent View and staff and pupil responses from those who took part in the Ofsted online surveys.