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9 May 2018

Ms Rebecca Lumb
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Dear Ms Lumb

Short inspection of Prospect Hill Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 24 April 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You took up post 19 months ago and quickly identified that pupils were not making sufficient progress at that time. You quickly galvanised a highly effective senior team, supported the development of a reflective but new governing body, and trained, challenged and supported teaching staff. By the end of your first year, progress overall had risen, particularly in reading. Prospect Hill Junior School is now a school with energy and ambition.

The school is warm and friendly. As it has become more successful, so more children have joined the school from outside the usual catchment area. They have been welcomed. Leaders and governors believe that relationships with parents and carers are central to the pupils' success. You have introduced regular activity sessions for parents to find out about what their children are learning. These sessions are increasingly well attended – many parents value this contact with the school and with each other. Grandparents too are included. An event which attracted just a small number of grandparents when it started has swelled to almost 50 recently, taking staff by surprise. For children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, the child-centred termly reviews place the views of the child and parents at the heart. Examples were seen where what happened after the review had been clearly led by the views of the parent or the child. This is a school for the whole family.

Governors are now knowledgeable and keen for the school to improve further. They ensure that they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and

weaknesses. They check this knowledge through regular discussions with you and other school leaders, but also by visiting during the day to see for themselves. Their individual links with a subject or a year group mean that they can provide a greater focus on them. Governors look at pupils' work. They are not all professional teachers, but they are more than capable of deciding whether there has been an improvement, in handwriting for example. Governors are proud of the strong team approach across the school. They speak highly of improving communication with parents, which they attribute to you.

The pupils are polite, informative and friendly. During this inspection, they spoke confidently in their lessons to each other, to the whole class and to me. They explained what they were learning and showed interest and sometimes excitement about what they would learn next. Their behaviour was excellent. Any occurrences of poor behaviour are tackled firmly and effectively using reward wherever possible but also sanctions and support if poor behaviour is linked to an underlying need. The emphasis is on praise and celebration – even governors will send a thank-you note to the pupils after they have looked at pupils' work.

The most dramatic improvement since the last inspection concerns attendance. Prior to your arrival, attendance was falling. Disadvantaged pupils had the lowest attendance. Their persistent absence was a particular worry. This has now improved from 18.4% in 2016 to 1.4% in the current academic year. Nearly every pupil is now keen to come to school every day. You are persistent with those families where there are still concerns.

The other area identified for improvement at the last inspection concerned improving teaching so that there is more challenge for pupils, an important focus for this inspection. Pupils' progress in 2015 was in the lowest fifth of schools nationally. By 2017, most Year 6 pupils attained the expected standard for reading, writing and mathematics at or above the national average. Their progress was broadly average. However, few pupils reached the highest standard in reading, writing or mathematics. This will be an important next step.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have detailed knowledge of the pupils in your school and the difficulties that some of them face. As the school's designated safeguarding officer, you have ensured that staff are trained and know what to do if they have a concern. Recruitment procedures are secure. Policy and practice take account of the most recent legislation and provide clarity on a wide range of possible circumstances. You ensure that safeguarding records are detailed and well organised. You take decisive and persistent action where necessary to ensure that each individual child is protected. You work effectively with other agencies. You have ensured that practice is well scrutinised by the annual school audit of safeguarding being carried out this year by a headteacher from a local school.

Pupils' good conduct plays a significant part in their feelings of safety when in school. The buildings are attractive and well maintained. Every parent who

responded to Parent View said that their child felt safe. In summary, the leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors are aware that progress needs to improve still further, particularly to the highest levels. Questioning in lessons has been a focus and there is now evidence of challenging questions being posed. In one example seen, pupils stretched their calculation skills by tackling an addition of three mixed-number fractions with different denominators. Far from appearing alarmed, pupils set to work eagerly, making good use of the time provided by the teacher for them to discuss ideas with their peers. In another example, two older pupils inferred subtle meaning from a text about space tourism.
- The quality of teaching and the impact of training are monitored rigorously and effectively by school leaders. You regularly work with leaders in other schools to compare standards and identify remaining weaknesses. Last year, one of the main school priorities was improving reading. The improvements seen in reading outcomes between 2016 and 2017 indicate that school leaders are able to identify priorities accurately, take the right actions and get a positive result.
- You and your leaders acknowledge that there is still more to do. You have turned attention now to writing and mathematics. Information about the progress of pupils currently in the school shows that these subjects are also improving. However, there is still insufficient writing of the highest quality in older pupils' books. Handwriting has improved in Years 3 to 5, but it is inconsistent in Year 6. Older boys, in particular, are not writing enough and do not yet demonstrate a consistent maturity of style. In mathematics, it is the other way around. School improvement plans identify a lack of resilience among girls in mathematics, which is being tackled well. Quite rightly, all pupils are now able to try the most challenging tasks. You know that the highest standards should be possible for pupils with both high- and middle prior attainment.
- Pupils' progress is regularly checked. Although extra support is decided based on what the individual pupil needs, leaders keep a careful eye on the progress of different groups of pupils such as boys and girls, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils. Senior leaders check pupils' work frequently and decide what is needed if they notice any slippage. The school improvement plan identifies priorities correctly. Leaders should remain alert in the future to any changes in progress made by different groups. For example, differences in girls' and boys' progress appear to be an issue now. As more pupils join the school outside the usual admission time, their progress may need separate attention. The pupil premium strategy may need to change more obviously year on year, to recognise a changing cohort.
- Leaders make good use of the additional funding made available through the pupil premium and for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. For pupils who have SEN particularly, barriers are identified with great clarity and interventions clearly matched to needs. For disadvantaged pupils, the rapid improvement in their attendance indicates an underlying confidence that the school is meeting their needs and their learning is more successful. In 2017, improvements in

reading for these pupils moved to the highest fifth of schools nationally from the lowest fifth in 2016. Improvements in writing and mathematics were evident but less dramatic.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching continues to improve so that more pupils reach the higher standards by the end of Year 6
- they continue to track the progress of different pupil groups so that relative underachievement in the future is identified and addressed quickly.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Ward
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I considered evidence from a range of sources, including the previous inspection report and information about the school's performance in 2016 and 2017. I looked at the school's website and read a range of key policies, including the pupil premium strategy. I spoke with one grandparent at the gate and I considered the 16 responses on Parent View. Meetings were held with you, school leaders and governors to discuss progress since the last inspection. I considered a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation documents and improvement plans, an impact report for 2016/17, records of monitoring by senior leaders, review documentation for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, the single central record of the checks on staff and volunteers, a sample of recruitment files, the safeguarding policy, and records of actions taken to protect pupils' welfare. I looked at training certificates. I talked with staff to make sure that they knew what to do if they were concerned about a child. We jointly made visits to lessons, looked at the quality of work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils in lessons. I also examined attendance information for the current year.