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Ms Gaynor Moore
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Moore

Short inspection of Yardley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 April 2018 with Paul Longden HMI, 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 February 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 leadership team are aspirational for the school and are committed to pupils being the best they can be. You regularly review the work that you do and continually seek to make improvements. You and your team work together well to ensure that pupils achieve good outcomes. You keep a close eye on pupils' progress and attainment. Pupils are taught well and, consequently, they make good progress.

The care and nurture of pupils is a high priority and you value the strong relationships you have with parents and carers. The parents spoken to during the inspection equally value their relationship with the school. They hold it in high regard. They appreciate the friendly, welcoming atmosphere and the good communication. Many parents commented that staff are visible, approachable and have time to talk.

Pupils are well behaved and conduct themselves well around school. At lunchtimes, pupils take part in a range of physical activities such as football, cricket and basketball as well as more passive activities in the reading garden. The 'keep fit' area is well used and pupils talk about the importance of keeping fit. In lessons, pupils work hard and are focused on their learning so that they make good progress over time.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Leaders, teachers and support staff have undertaken training and have adopted effective strategies to provide greater challenge to pupils, in particular the most able.

The local authority has limited involvement with the school. However, it uses your expertise to support other local schools in reading. You have also shared your good practice in safeguarding with newly appointed social workers.

Safeguarding is effective.

Procedures, policies and systems for the recruitment of staff and the recording of concerns are thorough and well organised. There is a high level of vigilance. Staff are trained well and know how to keep both pupils and themselves safe, for example in the use of social media. Staff are clear about what actions to take if they have a concern about a pupil or a member of staff. Leaders check their knowledge and understanding frequently at meetings. The designated safeguarding leads work closely together to ensure that pupils are kept as safe as possible and families are well supported. Consequently, there is a strong culture of safeguarding and arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils are well cared for. There is a high level of supervision when pupils arrive at school, at breaktimes and at lunchtimes. Pupils know who to go to if they have an accident or a concern. Aspects of safeguarding such as child sexual exploitation, domestic violence and digital safety are addressed sensitively through the curriculum.

Inspection findings

- Historically, pupils' attendance has been below national figures. Persistent absence, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, has been high. Leaders work hard to tackle attendance and have introduced a range of strategies to reward good attendance and address poor attendance. For example, they have engaged a family support worker and this has had a positive impact. Over time, attendance has improved. However, current figures show that this is not being sustained. Leaders attribute some of this to the number of unauthorised holidays taken in term time, which have doubled during this academic year. Currently, leaders do not intervene as early as they could when pupils' attendance declines.
- Governors receive a wealth of information about the school and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They visit the school to evaluate first-hand the impact of school improvement actions. They regularly check safeguarding arrangements, such as the single central record. However, governors cannot hold leaders to account as well as they might because the evaluation of additional funding, such as pupil premium and the physical education and sports premium, does not show specific and measurable outcomes.

- Pupils' progress and attainment in writing has not been as strong as in reading and mathematics, especially for disadvantaged pupils and boys. Despite some improvement in 2017, leaders recognise that writing continues to be an area for development. Leaders have taken positive steps to promote the use of rich vocabulary through developing reading into writing. Disadvantaged pupils are supported well and, as a result, are making strong progress. High-quality texts are chosen to engage the interests of boys. Teachers have high expectations and encourage pupils to make effective use of a wider vocabulary and grammatical features. However, on occasion, pupils are not clear about the skills they are developing to enable them to move forward more quickly in their learning. In Reception, children's handwriting is very well formed. In some year groups, however, most notably in Years 3 and 4, handwriting and presentation is not of a consistently good standard.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2017, pupils achieved below the national average at the higher standard in reading and writing. Writing was also below national figures at the higher standard in 2016. In key stage 1, pupils achieved below the national figure at a greater depth in writing and mathematics in both 2016 and 2017. As a result, leaders have ensured that this is a school improvement priority. They track the progress and attainment of the most able pupils carefully and teachers generally challenge pupils well. A member of the English team oversees work in each key stage of the school to ensure high expectations. For example, in Year 1, the most able pupils are encouraged to punctuate speech. Leaders have reviewed class texts so that there is now a higher level of challenge in each year group. Consequently, the most able pupils use ambitious vocabulary and emotive language well. Work in books shows that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress.
- Leaders use the assessment system effectively to track the progress and attainment of key groups, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the most able. Leaders analyse year groups closely and staff develop action plans to address any areas of underachievement. Current assessment information shows that in almost all year groups, pupils are attaining close to, or above, end of year targets, including at a higher standard.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' attendance continues to be rigorously addressed so that it improves closer to the national average
- the evaluation and impact of additional funding is more specific and measurable so that governors can hold leaders to account more stringently
- teachers have consistently high expectations of handwriting and presentation in all year groups
- pupils are clear about the skills that they are developing in writing to make even better progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Cameron
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with you and your senior leadership team, the family support worker and the pastoral support manager. Inspectors met with the chair of governors and two other governors, and spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day and considered one letter, received during the inspection, 27 responses to Parent View and 17 free-text responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. Inspectors also considered 13 responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey. However, inspectors spoke to pupils informally during the day. Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the single central record, safeguarding records, your school self-evaluation document and school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, and attendance and assessment information. Inspectors visited all year groups with you and senior leaders and looked at pupils' work, especially in writing. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including at breaktime and lunchtime.