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15 May 2018

Mr Michael Mellin
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mellin

Short inspection of Park Primary 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Pupils make strong progress from low starting points. By the end of Year 6, most attain the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics and are well prepared for secondary school.

You lead the school with a passion, energy and enthusiasm that are infectious. As a result, a strong sense of purpose and buzz of excitement characterise the school's industrious and happy atmosphere. All the parents and carers who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that their children are happy at school, and pupils agree. Staff share your commitment and aspirations for pupils' achievement and well-being. They enjoy working at the school and morale is high. You are committed to developing your staff's leadership skills and empowering them to play a key part in school improvement. You receive strong support from your deputy headteacher, who moved seamlessly into this role when your previous deputy left for promotion. This transition is an excellent example of how you cultivate leaders and strengthen the school's capacity for improvement.

When the school was last inspected, leaders were asked to raise standards in writing and ensure that teachers consistently challenge the most able pupils. You have tackled these areas well. By the end of Year 6, pupils now achieve far better in writing. In 2016, Year 6 pupils' progress in writing was above average and in 2017 it was in the top 10% of schools nationally. In both years, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard was also above average. Writing is taught effectively across the school. However, despite children's good progress in the early

years and key stage 1, standards by the end of Year 2 are typically below average. This is also the case for reading and mathematics. You and your staff work very effectively to address the many barriers to learning that children face when they begin the early years. It is clear that, despite strong teaching, these barriers affect outcomes at the end of Year 2. However, leaders are not complacent and are determined to raise standards by the end of Year 2. You have enabled stronger collaboration between the early years and key stage 1 staff. This is improving the consistency of assessments between these phases and ensuring that the early years staff are clear about the standards pupils should reach by the end of Year 2. Your appointment of a phonics leader has had a very positive impact on teaching and learning in this aspect of reading. While these actions are not fully embedded, early signs of higher standards are evident in pupils' work and the school's assessments.

Leaders use a range of telling evidence to check that the quality of teaching and learning remains strong throughout the school. Your monitoring focuses closely on the extent to which teachers meet the needs of all groups of pupils, including the most able. The sample of work I reviewed showed that teachers provide the most able pupils with tasks that allow them to develop a deeper understanding of subjects. These include more complex or open-ended reasoning and problem-solving activities. The reasoned arguments written by the most able Year 6 pupils about the severity of crime in Elizabethan times was a convincing example of this. Increasingly, more pupils are reaching the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. In 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching this standard in mathematics equalled the national average, while in grammar, punctuation and spelling it was above average. Most pupils feel that teachers give them challenging work to complete.

You ensure that pupils receive a broad and interesting curriculum, with many enrichment activities. The curriculum also prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. All staff are trained to teach pupils about fundamental British values and they identify relevant and meaningful links with British values when planning topics. This increases pupils' knowledge and understanding, which in turn enables them to talk confidently about British values. For example, when discussing individual liberty, pupils were adamant that freedom does not mean doing whatever you want. Rather, they explained that people have rights and can make choices, but have to stick within the parameters set out in law. Pupils are also very clear about the importance of respecting people's differences.

A team of very committed and experienced governors enhances the strong quality of leadership and management. Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. They use their varying expertise to evaluate the school's work, challenge its leaders and guide its strategic improvement. The school's ethos is highly inclusive and reflects leaders' and governors' fervent commitment to equalities.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has created a strong safeguarding culture and ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Thorough checks are made on staff, governors, volunteers and visitors to ascertain that they are suitable people to work with children. Regular safeguarding training ensures that staff are alert to the signs that indicate pupils might be at risk or in need of help. You and your designated safeguarding leader have created a climate in which staff feel confident to report any concerns. Your records show that they do so and that these are followed up quickly and thoroughly. There are very effective links with external professional agencies. These ensure that, where necessary, pupils and their families receive the help and support they need. Meticulous records of safeguarding concerns, incidents and accidents are maintained. These provide comprehensive information about the school's actions and communications with parents and other professionals.

The overwhelming majority of parents consider that their children are well looked after and safe in school. Pupils echo this view. Pupils are well educated about how to stay safe. This includes teaching pupils how to identify risks and potential dangers when using technology. You have established a strong anti-bullying culture. Pupils understand about different types of bullying, how bullying makes people feel, and what they should do if they see or experience it. The pupils I spoke to explained the immense trust they have in teachers and other staff to deal with any bullying that might occur. This view also came through strongly in pupils' response to Ofsted's online survey. You have worked closely with parents to improve their understanding of bullying and the school's approach to dealing with it. For example, a specialist adviser helped a parent group produce an anti-bullying guidance leaflet for parents. Your records show that all allegations of bullying are recorded and investigated thoroughly, including any incidents of prejudice-based behaviour. Pupils are positive about behaviour and say that in lessons and around the school it is mostly good.

Leaders and staff constantly reinforce the importance of regular attendance. You have very effective strategies to track, celebrate and reward good and improved attendance. Last year, there was an increase in overall attendance rates and a reduction in persistent absence. You agree that work in this area should continue to ensure that attendance and persistent absence improve further and move closer to national figures.

Inspection findings

- A line of enquiry for the inspection was to look at how well pupils are achieving in the early years and key stage 1. This was because the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years has declined in recent years and pupils' attainment in key stage 1 has been below the national average for a long time. You were able to demonstrate how you have improved the accuracy of assessment in the early years. You are now confident that the school's assessment systems provide an accurate picture of what children know and can do. You do not feel this has always been the case, and you feel that

some of the assessments have been overgenerous in the past. As a result, you feel that the lower proportions of children reaching a good level of development in 2016 and 2017 reflected a more accurate picture of their attainment, rather than a decline in the quality of provision. While children's attainment at the end of Reception in 2017 was below average, it was not significantly below. Given children's starting points on entry to the early years, they achieve well. This is reflected in children's learning journals and the school's assessment information. The collaboration with staff in key stage 1 is resulting in an even sharper focus on the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics in the early years. In turn, this is helping to ensure that, by the end of Reception, more children are ready for the demands of the key stage 1 curriculum.

- You provided convincing evidence to demonstrate that pupils make good progress in key stage 1. You have undertaken a great deal of work to ensure that your assessments of pupils' achievement in key stage 1 are accurate and reliable. You feel that pupils make good progress as a result of effective teaching. Our visits to classrooms, and my scrutiny of pupils' work, confirmed the strengths in teaching that you highlighted as a result of your monitoring. You have also implemented a number of strategies to further improve teaching and these are in the process of being embedded. Early indications suggest that these strategies are beginning to further quicken the rates of progress being made by pupils. Despite this, you are acutely aware that attainment has been low for a long period of time, and you are fiercely committed to ensuring that attainment in key stage 1 gets, at the very least, close to national averages.
- Another line of enquiry was to evaluate the accuracy of teachers' assessments of Year 6 pupils' attainment in writing and science. Teachers' assessments indicate that a higher proportion of pupils attain the expected standards in these subjects in comparison to reading and mathematics, which are marked externally. The samples of writing I reviewed validated teachers' assessments. You also demonstrated how teachers' assessments are subject to thorough external checks to ensure their accuracy. Pupils' work shows that teachers provide pupils with many interesting opportunities to develop writing skills in English and other subjects. These include descriptions, for example of the death scene in 'Romeo and Juliet', biographies of famous historians and scientists, reports about the rainforest and recounts of ancient Greek myths. Pupils use adventurous vocabulary to enliven their writing and pay good attention to punctuation, spelling and grammar. Consequently, I was able to confirm the validity of teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in writing.
- Pupils achieve very well in science and the school has been awarded a quality mark for the strength of its provision. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their learning in science. They are quick to recall memorable experiences, such as the dissection of a sheep's heart and the slime investigation. Their work shows that they make strong progress in developing scientific knowledge and enquiry skills. Again, this confirms the accuracy of teachers' assessments.
- My final line of enquiry was about pupils' learning and progress in the wider curriculum. Teachers provide pupils with a rich variety of learning experiences that successfully develop their knowledge and skills in a broad range of subjects. Since the start of this academic year, you have introduced formal assessments of

pupils' attainment in all subjects. While this is at a relatively early stage of implementation, it is already enhancing the information subject leaders gather about pupils' achievement. Pupils' learning is enriched by regular opportunities to work outdoors, stimulating educational visits, a variety of different visitors, and a wide range of before- and after-school clubs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- by the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are in line with, or much closer to, national averages
- attendance continues to improve and persistent absence continues to reduce.

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

Yours sincerely

Margot D'Arcy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss the school's work and priorities for improvement. I reviewed a range of school documents, including those relating to safeguarding and behaviour. You and your deputy headteacher joined me in observing learning and behaviour in a sample of lessons. I looked at samples of pupils' work in writing and science, some early years journals and assessments, and work pupils had undertaken about fundamental British values. I met with five governors and had a separate meeting with a representative of Wirral local authority and your school improvement associate. I held a formal discussion with a group of pupils from key stage 2 and spoke to others informally at lunchtime. I spoke to approximately 15 parents as they brought their children to school. I considered 19 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 18 written comments. I also took account of a recent parental survey conducted by the school, to which over 300 parents responded. I considered 38 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and 110 responses to the online pupils' survey.