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5 November 2018

Mr Charles Welsh
Executive Headteacher
Gardners Lane Primary School
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Dear Mr Welsh

Short inspection of Gardners Lane Primary School

Following my visit with Julie Fox, Ofsted Inspector, to the school on 16 October 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 July 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

The school has undergone some considerable building work to accommodate the increase in pupil numbers. There are 100 more pupils than at the time of the previous inspection. Despite the disruption caused by the school's expansion, you and your team have been resolute in your focus on continued improvement. Your determined leadership ensures that pupils continue to achieve well academically. By the time they leave Gardners Lane, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Pupils catch up from their low starting points. By the end of Year 6, pupils' progress sits in the top 5% of schools in reading, writing and mathematics, and current work in books shows that similar high standards are being maintained.

Alongside your strong commitment to developing pupils' academic ability, you are staunch in your drive to develop pupils' personal qualities. All leaders have high expectations of the pupils. Your 'community' and 'whole-child' values underpin everyone's attitude to learning. Pupils are confident and polite and take the school's values very seriously. Pupils are respectful of adults and one another and work together well. Parents and carers praise the school's work and value the approachability of staff.

A much higher proportion of pupils than nationally are eligible for support provided by the pupil premium funding. These pupils increasingly make strong progress in

reading, writing and mathematics to achieve at least in line with others nationally by the end of Year 6. While you accept that, for some, there is a seven-year journey to reach national expectations, you are not complacent. You and your team are continually reviewing the quality of teaching, so that more pupils make rapid progress across early years and key stage 1 to be ready for key stage 2.

You have tackled the two issues from the previous inspection successfully. Pupils' books show that spelling and grammar are accurate. Pupils' attainment in writing improved at both key stages 1 and 2 last year. By the time pupils leave Year 6, they make strong progress, so that a greater proportion than the national average reach the expected standard. A similar picture exists in mathematics. Finely tuned teaching supports pupils' acquisition of calculation skills well. You have identified that there is still a need to support pupils' rapid recall of multiplication facts to problem solve efficiently. You have the right measures in place to tackle this.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding policies and procedures are thorough and comply with the most recent government guidelines. Staff are recruited safely. During our visit, we questioned staff with different roles and experience about their understanding of the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils. We checked to see whether they knew what to do should they be concerned about a child's safety. Without exception, staff knew whom to go to if they had any concerns about a pupil. However, administration of records associated with safeguarding systems requires strengthening in some respects. Your team is currently in the process of addressing this.

Your insightful knowledge of pupils and their families helps you to involve other agencies where any concerns arise. You are quick to escalate concerns where you feel you are not being listened to. There is a perceptibly nurturing atmosphere around the school. Pupils are well supported. Staff provide high-quality support for pupils who have social, emotional and behavioural needs, so that these pupils can engage and achieve. Previously high rates of exclusion have been eradicated.

The personal, social and health curriculum develops pupils' understanding of safeguarding risks well. They told inspectors that bullying is very rare, but that if they are sad or fall out with their friends, adults are quick to resolve issues. Pupils were knowledgeable about keeping safe on the internet.

Inspection findings

- Firstly, we explored how effective the support was for pupils who are still struggling to read well by the end of key stage 1. Historically, too few children who leave early years unable to read and understand simple sentences catch up by the time they leave key stage 1. Leaders have tackled this issue with some success. You have raised the profile of reading through the introduction of daily reading time together, including class discussions about the text pupils read. In

In addition, there has been investment in books to supplement the schemes already used in school. Pupils told inspectors how they enjoyed reading and that they looked forward to the completion of the school's new library. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading by the end of key stage 1 increased in 2018 to be broadly in line with the national average.

- In addition to raising the profile of reading, pupils who struggle to read receive additional support, in small groups and one to one, to read with accuracy and understanding. Staff track pupils' progress closely and match activities well so that pupils build on their accuracy and understanding when reading. However, on occasions, there is a mismatch between what pupils do in their additional groups and what they do in the classroom. When this occurs, pupils' progress slows.
- Next, we looked at the quality of teaching and assessment in phonics in early years and key stage 1. Although increasing year on year, a smaller proportion of pupils than the national average meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Many children enter early years with limited vocabulary. Leaders work closely with Nursery to ensure that children are increasingly 'school ready'. Teachers prioritise communication and language skills when children start school, with the extensive use of nursery rhymes and high-quality interaction between staff and children. Teaching follows a planned progression of letters and sounds. The school uses a combination of phonics programmes and reading books. This leads to inconsistencies in teaching and does not help children to practise the letters and sounds that they have learned. There are occasions when pupils do not have the skills to decode the words in their books and lack strategies to blend letters. This reduces their fluency and understanding of what they are reading.
- However, early years teachers have had much success in engaging parents in workshops related to reading and phonics. These have been well received and have led to an increase in parents reading with their child at home. Leaders regard phonics and the development of early reading as a priority. They continue to ensure that time and resources are suitably allocated to support staff and their subject knowledge, to meet the needs of pupils effectively. Additional support for pupils in small-group and one-to-one sessions is carefully thought out and matches pupils' needs.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of phonics in early years and key stage 1 supports the weakest readers and writers to make accelerated progress
- the attendance of those pupils who are persistently absent from school continues to improve.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Gloucestershire. This letter

will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors worked extensively with you and other senior leaders throughout the day. We saw a range of phonics sessions, including small support groups from Reception to Year 2. An inspector checked the accuracy of teachers' assessments through checking pupils' phonic knowledge directly with them. We also talked with pupils during lessons, and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. An inspector scrutinised safeguarding records and we discussed a wide range of related matters, including staff recruitment, training and vetting arrangements. We spoke with pupils and staff about their views of safeguarding. The lead inspector also reviewed evidence of various referrals and communications with external agencies for safeguarding pupils.

The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and a sample of governors' visits. We took full account of the four responses on Parent View, as well as reviewing the free-text comments received through the inspection. To supplement this, an inspector met directly with some parents. The lead inspector had a discussion with an officer from the local authority.