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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Jude Ramshaw
Headteacher
Court Lane Infant Academy
Hilary Avenue
Cosham
Portsmouth
Hampshire
PO6 2PP

Dear Mrs Ramshaw

Short inspection of Court Lane Infant Academy

Following my visit to the school on 1 November 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 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 lead an ambitious, happy and hardworking school where pupils and staff strive continuously to live out the school's values of 'believe, inspire, achieve'. The leadership team has high expectations of what pupils know and can do. This is matched effectively with well-targeted actions to address aspects of the school's work that need to be developed further.

Pupils say that they love coming to school. They talk openly and enthusiastically about their learning and their enjoyment of lessons and playtime. Pupils described their school as 'brilliant, fantastic and fun'. They are very well behaved, move around the building sensibly and use equipment carefully. In lessons, pupils maintain their concentration well and pay full attention to the guidance that adults offer them. Consequently, they achieve well.

The vast majority of parents are overwhelmingly positive about the caring and positive ethos at the school. I was told, for example, 'We moved to get in to the school and are delighted with its warm feel.' Parents say that their children are happy and enjoy learning. They feel that the staff provide good support for their children.

Governors and the University of Chichester (Multi) Academy Trust have an in-depth knowledge of the school's work. They keep their skills up to date and attend regular training to do so. Governors ensure that leaders provide them with high-quality

information on the school's effectiveness. Governors and trustees use this information, as well as their own skills and knowledge, to hold leaders to account effectively.

Leaders have tackled effectively the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. You have ensured that teaching typically meets the needs of pupils and learning moves on well. Pupils' books show how you include good opportunities to develop pupils' skills across different subjects through well-planned activities. Middle leaders are a significant strength of the school. They promote consistently strong teaching through precise monitoring of learning and achievement with subsequent effective support. Middle leaders play an important role in ensuring that there is a rich and well-planned curriculum. For example, the Year 1 leader who has responsibility for the foundation subjects ensures that different areas of the curriculum are linked closely together. This means that there are some excellent opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in wide-ranging contexts.

You and your senior leaders are aware that pupils' writing skills are not as strong as those in reading and mathematics. There are times when the quality of teachers' questioning varies and, as a result, learning slows. Occasionally, staff do not challenge pupils to think deeply enough about how to use their writing skills precisely. When this happens, pupils, especially boys, do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders, governors, trustees and staff make sure that safeguarding runs deeply through all aspects of the school's work. You and your governors carry out all necessary checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. Staff receive regular training and updates so that they are vigilant and understand and implement the most recent guidance. Staff are highly knowledgeable about how to seek advice and support if they are concerned about a pupil's welfare.

Leaders draw on external support appropriately to ensure that your safeguarding policy and practice meet statutory requirements. Swift and appropriate action is taken when incidents are reported, including referral to social services when necessary. You and your senior leaders follow up referrals rigorously.

Children say that they feel very safe in school and speak positively about the many adults in school that would help them if they had a concern. You provide pupils with a good range of meaningful opportunities within the curriculum to learn how to stay safe.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on four key lines of enquiry agreed at our first meeting. The first of these was to determine the impact of the school's strategies to improve outcomes for boys in writing. The study and critical thinking around key texts have helped pupils, including boys, to write with purpose and precision. There are effective opportunities to write across the curriculum ensuring that boys' progress is usually rapid. Pupils' spelling is accurate when they build sentences because of the strong and timely reinforcement of phonics. However, there are times when the level of challenge does not stretch pupils' thinking sufficiently, particularly for boys. This slows the progress that pupils make. Occasionally, teachers' questioning does not make pupils think deeply about their writing or challenge them to use their writing skills accurately enough.
- My second key line of enquiry concerned the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders, teachers and support staff are adept at identifying, tracking and supporting this group of pupils, including those with particular needs. Disadvantaged pupils make rapid and sometimes very rapid progress, evidenced in their books and the school's achievement information. Their rapid progress extends beyond English and mathematics to other subjects, for example history and geography. Disadvantaged pupils benefit from effective phonics teaching that takes account of what they already know. They enjoy reading and use their phonics knowledge confidently to read unfamiliar words. As a result, attainment in reading is rising quickly. Disadvantaged pupils reach standards in line with the national average in writing and mathematics because teachers have good subject knowledge.
- I investigated how successfully middle leaders promote good-quality teaching. Middle leaders have an accurate understanding of the priorities for improving the quality of teaching. They are determined to improve pupils' outcomes through high-calibre teaching and feel well supported by you and the trust to improve their skills in developing others. Middle leaders monitor accurately the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement. They keep a careful check on how pupils improve their knowledge, understanding and skills in the full range of subjects. Middle leaders are highly reflective and, as a result, check that their actions make a positive difference to the quality of teaching and how well pupils learn. Middle leaders also undertake regular training to keep their skills up to date and sharp.
- Finally, I evaluated the impact of leaders' actions on the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders use a wide range of strategies to promote good levels of attendance so that pupils make the most of the experiences the school has to offer. Leaders work well with external agencies and families to provide personalised support for pupils with high levels of absence. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' attendance is in line with the national average and is continuing to improve. Your work, and the more regular attendance of disadvantaged pupils, ensures that these pupils are making more rapid progress than previously.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers' planning appropriately challenges pupils, particularly boys, to develop their writing skills
- teachers' use of questioning enhances pupils' understanding and consolidates their progress.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Portsmouth. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

At the start of the inspection, we agreed four lines of enquiry. I held meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders and pupils. I held other meetings with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and with the designated safeguarding lead. I also spoke to a representative from the trust responsible for school improvement, and the chief executive officer. I visited lessons, spoke with pupils and parents, and looked at pupils' work. In addition, I considered responses to the staff survey and pupil survey and responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.