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Mrs Pam Howell
Headteacher
Severnbanks Primary School
Naas Lane
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Dear Mrs Howell

Short inspection of Severnbanks Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 the school was judged to be good in December 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

At the last inspection you were asked to provide pupils with challenging work in writing and mathematics, and to improve the quality of teaching to outstanding. You were also asked to ensure that teachers check pupils' understanding of new learning.

From low starting points, the majority of children make effective progress in the early years. However, they need more time to consolidate their skills and catch up. This means that half of the children typically begin Year 1 with knowledge, understanding and skills below those typical for their age. Some additional teaching interventions help pupils to catch up. For example, recent improvements to the teaching of phonics have resulted in a considerable increase in the proportion of pupils achieving expected standards in the Year 1 phonics check.

You have provided training to improve the teaching of reading and mathematics. This led to good progress and considerable improvements in outcomes in Year 6 last year. The proportion of pupils who achieved well in most subjects was well above that of pupils nationally. However, these improvements were not reflected in other year groups. Teachers in both key stages do not routinely match learning to pupils' ability. As a result, pupils either find work does not challenge them, or is too difficult. Adults do not consistently intervene in pupils' learning to check their

understanding. This limits how well they can correct pupils' misconceptions or deepen their understanding. Although most pupils make the progress you expect of them, this is not sufficient to enable them to catch up from their low starting points. As a result, too few pupils achieve the standards typical for their age at the end of key stage 1, particularly in reading and writing. Just under half of all current pupils are achieving below what is typical for their age in all subjects.

You provide targeted help for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This helps pupils to manage their emotions and develop their social and communication skills. This is paying dividends and is helping pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. However, it is not yet having sufficient impact on pupils' academic progress. As a result, a large proportion of pupils are behind in their learning.

Staff and parents agree that you are a supportive and approachable leader. You have a good understanding of the difficulties many pupils face. As a result, you work tirelessly to help pupils and their families. The school has gained a positive reputation in the community for the way in which you help pupils to manage their behaviour. Pupils are a credit to the school. They are clear about your expectations and are polite and welcoming. Pupils typically say they love learning. This means that they follow instructions sensibly and approach their work with enthusiasm. Parents typically comment, 'The school responds quickly and appropriately to concerns.' One parent added, 'I couldn't be happier with the school.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You place pupils' well-being and safety at the heart of all that you do. Your highly effective communication with parents ensures that you know when families need your help. You work effectively with your pastoral leader and deputy headteacher to tailor your support to meet pupils' needs. You do not hesitate to seek advice from external agencies when required. This ensures that pupils who need it receive specialist help. For example, you provide counselling and behaviour support.

You provide timely updates to safeguarding training for all staff and, as a result, all adults recognise that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. They can clearly explain the procedures they must follow if they have concerns about pupils. You maintain detailed, well-organised safeguarding records. You meticulously follow up your actions to assure yourself that they are having a positive impact. You undertake the necessary checks to ensure that all adults working in the school are safe to work with children. You clearly record these details on the school's single central record.

You liaise closely with parents to explain the importance of good attendance. You rigorously follow up absence to ensure that pupils come to school regularly and benefit from the education you offer. You provide rewards which motivate pupils to come to school. As a result, attendance has improved for almost all groups of pupils. A small minority of pupils are unavoidably absent. Despite your determined efforts, several pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are frequently absent.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to check how you are improving teaching in the early years and key stage 1, particularly in phonics. This is because, over time, too few pupils achieve what is typical for their age by the end of each key stage. Historically, the proportion of pupils who achieve expected standards in the Year 1 phonics check has been well below that of pupils nationally.
- The majority of children begin the early years with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age. Teachers have a clear understanding of children's specific needs and interests and plan learning accordingly. For example, children are well supported to develop their communication, number and social skills. As a result, most children in the early years make effective progress from their low starting points. However, many children need more time to catch up and therefore half of the children leave the early years with low attainment.
- Your phonics leader has provided training for all staff and implemented extra teaching interventions. Better teaching led to notable improvements in phonics outcomes last year. The proportion of pupils who achieved expected standards in the Year 1 phonics check was close to that of pupils nationally. Pupils routinely practise and secure their skills in phonics. They apply their knowledge of phonics to read accurately. However, improvements to the teaching of phonics have not yet had a consistent impact on pupils' achievement in reading.
- Teachers do not routinely take account of pupils' starting points when planning their learning. This means that learning activities are not precisely matched to pupils' ability. As a result, pupils sometimes find work easy and complete tasks swiftly. Other pupils struggle to complete tasks, because they do not understand what to do. Teachers do not habitually check pupils' understanding, which limits how well they can support further learning. This limits the progress pupils make. Consequently, approximately half of pupils in key stage 1 do not develop the skills and knowledge they need for the next stage in their learning.
- Next, I wanted to determine the reason for the considerable improvements to outcomes at the end of the key stage 2 last year, particularly in reading and writing. I also wanted to check if similar improvements were reflected in year groups other than Year 6. You have provided training for staff to improve comprehension in reading, fluency in mathematics and grammar in writing. This led to improved outcomes in all subjects in Year 6 last year. However, it did not have a similar impact on other year groups. Our reviews of pupils' learning and your assessment information confirm that teaching does not consistently help pupils to make effective progress. As a result, just under half of the pupils throughout key stage 2 are not achieving well.
- Finally, I wanted to establish how effectively teaching supports disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is because, typically, few of these pupils achieve well. You work closely with parents and staff to support pupils' social, emotional and academic needs. The attendance of these pupils has improved, but despite your efforts, several pupils are regularly absent. Parents typically praise the school for the effective support you provide. Adults explain tasks carefully, which helps pupils to focus on their learning. However, although

there are a few striking examples of strong progress, teaching does not routinely help the majority of pupils to make strong enough progress to catch up.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teaching improves in the early years and key stage 1, particularly in phonics and writing, so that more pupils make effective progress and attain well
- teaching in all key stages and subjects is consistently matched to pupils' needs, so that it routinely challenges and supports pupils to achieve well
- well-planned interventions help disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to make strong progress, so that they catch up
- they improve the attendance of those pupils who are frequently absent.

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

Catherine Beeks
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I held several meetings with you and the deputy headteacher. I also met with the special educational needs coordinator, the early years leader and the pastoral leader. I held a meeting with governors and also met with the educational consultant who supports the school. I checked the school's single central record and safeguarding records. We also discussed your safeguarding procedures. We reviewed the school's latest assessment information and discussed the school's self-evaluation and development priorities. Together we observed learning in the early years, key stage 1 and Year 5. The early years leader joined us for some of these observations. The deputy headteacher joined me to observe learning in Year 3. We carried out a joint scrutiny of pupils' work in Years 1, 3 and 5, along with the early years leader and the Year 1 teacher. I heard three Year 3 pupils read. I spoke with several pupils in lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime to gain their views of the school. I talked to several parents at the beginning of the school day and considered 12 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, along with four additional free-text comments. I took account of 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and 48 responses to the online pupil survey.