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Mrs Julie Aldous
Headteacher
Middle Street Primary School
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Dear Mrs Aldous

Short inspection of Middle Street Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 December 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 school was judged to be good in March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have created a culture of strong partnership between staff, pupils and parents and carers that allows everyone to contribute to the success of the school. Pupils were involved in designing the school rules of being 'safe, respectful and ready'. They behave well in lessons and around school and can explain how the rules help them to be the best they can be. The school community is diverse and inclusive. Pupils and staff show mutual respect for each other and strong relationships create a real sense of community. One parent summed up the views of many when they said, 'Middle Street is a wonderful school. It nurtures its pupils as individuals. It's a close community – like a family.'

The areas identified for improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed. Pupils' writing is improving and they make good progress because of the actions taken by leaders. Governors know the school well and are clear about its areas of strength. They provide effective challenge and support. Governors receive useful information about the school's performance from leaders and use this to monitor the impact of actions taken. They have identified the need for leaders to report more clearly on the impact of pupil premium funding and to ensure that the strategy for spending is up to date.

A strength of the school is the work that it does to promote equality. You have ensured that pupils have a deep understanding of their own rights and those of others. A pupil explained, 'Diversity means we are all different but all the same.' Pupils' attitudes to each other are inclusive and they value their different

characteristics. One parent commented that, 'This school helps my children understand diversity in all aspects of their school life and accept their peers for what they are.'

The challenges of the compact school site are overcome by the careful planning of how space is used. For example, at lunchtime, pupils can choose from a variety of interesting activities that are organised carefully. They cooperate well and respect the 'zones' that are in place to help lunchtime run smoothly. Every inch of the school building is used to maximise learning opportunities, and staff and pupils use the space harmoniously together.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff know the pupils and their community well. You have made sure that staff are thoroughly trained to identify any problems that pupils might face. Staff are confident in reporting any concerns that they may have. The school takes effective steps when support for pupils and their families is required from external sources. Leaders' monitoring of pupils' safeguarding is effective and appropriate records are kept, but these are not all stored in the same place. The system for record keeping needs improving so that information can be accessed quickly.

The curriculum contributes well to keeping pupils safe. They benefit from a wide range of lessons that teach them how to look after themselves and others. Pupils can explain in detail what they have learned from road safety lessons. They are also able to identify steps that they take to keep themselves safe when online and what to do if they were to become victims of cyber bullying.

Pupils feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of friendship and know how and why friends sometimes disagree. Pupils understand the difference between 'falling out' and bullying, and trust adults to help resolve any issues that arise. They have a thorough understanding of the school's rules and can explain how they use them to stay safe within school and beyond.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at specific areas of the school's work including: the action taken by leaders to improve pupils' attendance; whether pupils, including boys and those who are disadvantaged, make good progress in writing; and the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing pupils for the next stage of their education.
- The attendance of pupils is improving and is now closer to the national average. You have sought external support to help improve pupils' attendance and are now monitoring absence levels carefully. When the attendance of individual pupils falls below an acceptable level, you take quick action to highlight the problem and work with families to overcome barriers to school attendance. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is still too low and although improving, too many are persistently absent.
- You have taken effective steps to improve pupils' writing. A range of approaches

have been introduced to raise the profile of writing in the school and motivate pupils. These include opportunities to celebrate pupils' work and more time to complete extended pieces of writing. Disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as other pupils because of the support they receive in class and carefully planned interventions.

- Leaders have supported teachers in designing English lessons that are based around a spine of good-quality texts that are planned carefully in each year group. Boys are enthusiastic about writing because they enjoy the texts that lessons are based on and are provided with purposeful writing opportunities. In Year 5, pupils were excited to write poems on the theme of diversity that were going to be entered in a competition organised by the Premier League.
- You have made sure that teachers have the skills and expertise to teach writing effectively. In lessons, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge when teaching complex grammatical rules. Teachers also ensure that they teach children to consider the impact of what they write on the person reading it. This results in deepening pupils' understanding of their own writing. When discussing the use of adjectives with their teacher, one pupil in Year 4 commented, 'If you use the wrong adjective, it ruins the noun.'
- Children in early years get off to a strong start and enjoy writing because they are provided with effective support and plentiful opportunities to write. Adults' questioning is highly effective in helping pupils expand their vocabulary. For example, a pupil exploring mixing colours was challenged to develop their vocabulary further by considering different shades of the colour that had been mixed. Pupils eagerly apply their developing phonic knowledge when writing and were observed doing this when they were designing their own characters based on the book they had been reading.
- You have ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced and that pupils have the opportunity to learn about a wide range of subjects. The integrated approach to the curriculum means that wherever possible, subjects are linked together. For example, in their 'Into the Forest' topic, pupils in Years 3 and 4 combine their learning in science, geography and English. Pupils can recall what they have learned from topics they have covered in previous years because what they learn is interesting and presented in memorable ways.
- Pupils achieve well across a broad range of subjects and are eager to join in with the opportunities with which they are provided. Pupils in Year 6 were enthusiastically rehearsing for their end-of-term show and were well supported by a specialist music teacher. Year 5 pupils have the opportunity to be trained as 'digital leaders'. They use the skills they learn to help other pupils develop their knowledge and skills in computing lessons. Artwork across the school is of a high standard. Pupils are taught about famous artists and the techniques they used. They are then encouraged to apply these to their own work and make good progress during their time at school.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the impact of pupil premium funding is evaluated and reported more effectively
- systems for recording safeguarding information are more robust and systematic, so that they mirror the strong safeguarding culture in the school
- the attendance of disadvantaged pupils improves and persistent absence decreases.

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

Yours sincerely

James Freeston
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior leaders and governors. I also spoke with a representative from the local authority. I visited lessons across the school to observe teaching, speak with pupils and look at their books. I spoke with pupils about their experiences of school. I met with middle leaders to discuss their roles and actions in school.

I analysed 50 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and nine responses to the staff survey. I examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, and documentation relating to safeguarding and spending of the pupil premium.