

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



24 December 2018

Mrs Zoe McGuigan  
Executive Headteacher  
Hertford Junior School  
Lynchet Close  
Brighton  
East Sussex  
BN1 7FP

Dear Mrs McGuigan

### **Short inspection of Hertford Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 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 the school was judged to be good in January 2015.

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.**

Since the previous inspection, the school has federated with Hertford Infants School and you have recently taken on the role of executive headteacher of both schools. You have very quickly established good working relationships with pupils, staff and governors.

You understand what needs to be done and have the capacity, knowledge and experience to bring about rapid improvement. The two heads of school have settled quickly into their new roles and understand their responsibilities. There is a strong sense of team spirit among leaders and other staff. This resulted in a stable staff through the recent times of change. However, some leaders and governors are very new to their roles and do not have the experience to ensure that their plans and actions have the required impact on raising standards.

The school is held in high regard by parents, carers, pupils, staff and the local community. Many parents know you well, and this has helped to ease a smooth transition into the new leadership structure. Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were extremely positive. One parent summarised the views of many with the comment: 'This is a nurturing, motivational and caring school. The executive headteacher is leading a new team well and ensures the correct balance of promoting academic progress within a safe,

nurturing, exciting and engaging curriculum.'

Pupils say that they enjoy learning. They demonstrate good attitudes to learning and most attend well. During the inspection, Year 5 shared their learning by hosting an interactive 'science museum' display of their work. Parents had been invited to visit, and Year 3 pupils were also observed visiting. There was a buzz of learning around the room from both year groups and good use of scientific language. Pupils had been writing with real purpose, both factually and creatively. Displays included individual pieces of needlework completed by all pupils to represent planets, alongside many creative models.

There have been weaknesses in some aspects of pupils' recent achievement. By the end of key stage 2, pupils make progress from their starting points broadly in line with national averages in reading and writing, but below average in mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining at the expected standard in 2018 dipped to be lower than that seen nationally in writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining at the higher standard in reading was above the national average, but below in writing and mathematics. The dip in attainment in mathematics has been significant over the past three years. Pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding do not do as well as their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2018, the differences in attainment and progress between the groups increased.

The school offers a vast range of clubs before, during and after school. An energetic basketball club was seen before school, running alongside the school's provision of breakfast club. Pupils at breaktime were enthusiastically registering for clubs to attend at lunchtime. Later in the day, the school was filled with the sound of singing from the after-school singing club run by the school's specialist music teacher. Pupils enjoy the range of clubs on offer to them and are very keen to take up the opportunity to participate.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that all improvements are carefully planned, monitored, evaluated and reviewed. You have since redesigned the school's development plan. Areas for development now have measurable targets, tight deadlines and clear expectations of progress and impact.

Leaders were also asked to improve teaching by ensuring consistency in teaching and teachers' expectations. In addition, you were asked to ensure that pupils' work was neat and tidy and best practice in teaching and learning was shared more widely. Although these areas have improved, you are aware that teachers still lack opportunities to work together with colleagues to share good practice. You have already arranged for this to take place with teachers in the infants' school. You have also arranged to share practice within the Brighton and Hove City Partnership, of which the school is a member. Teachers now set higher expectations for presentation, although these are not consistently met, nor are lapses consistently corrected.

The local authority is supporting you well in developing the role of executive headteacher and in making the necessary improvements in order to raise standards.

**Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pupils feel safe at school. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong, and this helps to keep pupils safe. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to stay safe online. All parents who responded to Parent View said that they feel that their children are safe at school.

Pupils have been taught about bullying and know that they should tell an adult if it happens to them or to someone else. Pupils say that bullying does not happen very often and that staff usually sort things out quickly when it does. Pupils know they have a trusted adult that they can go to for help. One pupil told me, 'No adult would ever turn their back on us.'

The designated leader for safeguarding makes the welfare of pupils a top priority. She has a detailed understanding of pupils' vulnerabilities and ensures that these pupils and their families receive the support they require. Work with external agencies is strong. This includes the care for those pupils who have child-protection or child-in-need plans.

All staff have received the required level of training and demonstrate an understanding of their responsibilities. Governors and leaders have not previously ensured that there are robust systems for effectively recording all of the safeguarding checks that are carried out.

## **Inspection findings**

- Firstly, I considered what you are doing to ensure that the differences between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and those of the other pupils are diminishing over time. Leaders have taken positive steps to improve attendance. For instance, disadvantaged pupils have been invited to attend breakfast club and encouraged to attend before-school clubs. The overall attendance of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, has improved. However, the number of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent is too high. This affects their learning.
- Differences in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are significant in all year groups across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress of disadvantaged pupils varies across the school. There is some evidence of differences diminishing, but not enough by the end of key stage 2.
- Leaders have made this work a priority and now have systems that enable them to monitor precisely how well disadvantaged pupils are doing. Interventions and support programmes are carefully reviewed and evaluated for impact on progress. However, in 2018 at the end of Year 6, differences in progress widened in reading, writing and mathematics. Current disadvantaged pupils are all making progress. However, not all are making the rapid progress required to enable them to catch up with their peers or to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Next, I looked at how leaders are responding to falling standards in mathematics.

Leaders introduced a new teaching scheme last year to raise standards, particularly in problem solving and reasoning. Evidence in books shows that pupils are not yet being given consistent opportunities to practise reasoning skills. Where this practice is in place, pupils are developing well the language of reasoning. However, too many pupils are not able to demonstrate the ability to record their reasoning and explain their thinking.

- Leaders have identified gaps in pupils' ability to rapidly recall and apply number facts. This is now being addressed across the school through additional teaching sessions designed to build up recall skills. As a result, however, some pupils are practising skills that they already have firmly embedded. The most able pupils are not being challenged sufficiently to enable them to make rapid progress during these sessions.
- My final line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of the governing body in understanding its roles and responsibilities. The governing body has undergone many changes since the federation of the two governing bodies in July 2017. Since then, the vast majority of governors have left and many new governors took up post in September 2018. There are two new co-chairs, who were both previous governors and who bring experience and knowledge to the role. A new clerk also started in September 2018.
- Governors have a range of experience and take their responsibilities seriously, with many new governors already committed to training in order to develop their skills. This is necessary because some members of the governing body lack the skills required to discharge their duties, for example in monitoring the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Governors analyse the information that leaders provide about pupils' attainment and progress. They already know the school well and challenge you with increasing vigour, with questioning appropriately recorded. The governors are aware that the school's website does not comply with expected standards and includes out-of-date policies and information. A new website is under development. Governance systems and processes have not yet had time to be developed or implemented. As a result, governance of the school requires time and support to become fully effective.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality of teaching in mathematics is improved so that pupils make consistently good progress by:
  - using assessment to plan activities which challenge the most able pupils
  - providing pupils with better strategies and opportunities to reason
  - ensuring that expectations of presentation are consistently met
- leadership at all levels effectively monitors and evaluates actions and initiatives introduced to raise standards, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
- capacity among senior leaders and governors is developed to embed new

procedures and bring about consistency

- they regularly monitor the records of pre-employment checks on staff and volunteers to ensure that these records are kept in line with government guidelines and reflect the high-quality safeguarding practice in the school.

I am copying this letter to the chair 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

Marcia Goodwin  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

I met with you and the heads of school, other members of school staff and members of the governing body. I also met with two representatives of the local authority. Together, you and I planned the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. With a head of school, I visited classes to observe pupils' learning, speak with pupils and look at their books. I spoke with pupils at breaktime and took into account 43 responses to the online pupil survey. I considered 66 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 62 written contributions by parents, and read one letter from a parent. I spoke with staff during the day and took account of eight responses to the online staff questionnaire. I also examined a sample of pupils' work. I looked at a range of documentation, including information about the work of governors, safeguarding and attendance. Additionally, I scrutinised and discussed the school's monitoring of pupils' progress and attainment, and the school's self-evaluation and development plans.