

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Joanne O'Connor  
Headteacher  
Tavistock Infant School  
Broadacres  
Calthorpe Park  
Fleet  
Hampshire  
GU51 4EB

Dear Mrs O'Connor

### **Short inspection of Tavistock Infant School**

Following my visit to the school on 31 January 2019, 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 February 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Under your energetic leadership, staff work determinedly together to ensure that pupils achieve of their best. You identify the school's strengths and priorities accurately to staff and governors, ensuring that there is a clarity of purpose in their shared work. As a result, pupils' outcomes are consistently strong, with above-average proportions meeting the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1. This ensures that pupils are well prepared for moving on to the challenges of junior school learning.

Leaders' vision of 'achieving happily together' is apparent throughout the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school and report feeling safe and well looked after. This was evident in the way they arrived at school on the day of the inspection, their enthusiasm not curtailed by the cold and wintry weather. Almost all parents who offered their views described a warm and supportive atmosphere that enables their children to thrive. One parent captured this well, saying: 'Tavistock has a great focus on learning and teaching but it also works hard to make the pupils well rounded people who are kind and polite.'

Since the last inspection, you have worked hard to address the areas that were identified as priorities for improvement. In particular, there is a shared focus on deepening the level of challenge for pupils as a routine part of their learning, regardless of their prior attainment. You and other school leaders prioritise staff time and training effectively to support them in achieving this goal. Together, your

staff look carefully at making opportunities for deeper thinking an integral part of their plans for pupils' learning experiences. The impact of this work is most evident in reading, where above-average proportions of pupils are working at greater depth by the end of Year 2.

Work to increase the proportion of pupils achieving a greater depth of learning in mathematics and, in particular, writing, is less well-established, so the impact is currently less evident. This remains an ongoing priority. However, pupils' work in mathematics showed routine opportunities to think more deeply and apply their learning. In writing, pupils respond well to teachers' recently raised expectations of what they are capable of.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Adults' commitment to keeping pupils safe is evident throughout the school. The staff's collective work to meet pupils' welfare needs is valued greatly by parents, who told me that the school has 'children at the heart of everything they do'. Staff know and care for pupils extremely well, enabling them to feel happy, safe and settled throughout their time at the school. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, such as through visits from a 'lollipop' person who taught them about how to cross roads safely.

Leaders and governors fulfil their safeguarding duties successfully. They make sure that systems and processes in the school are fit for purpose and support adults well in promoting pupils' safety and well-being. Staff receive useful training that gives them the confidence and skills to act swiftly and effectively if they have concerns about a child. As a result, pupils who may be at risk are supported well. Leaders keep careful records about their safeguarding work, liaising increasingly well with experts beyond the school to help meet the needs of pupils with specific challenges and vulnerabilities.

During 2017/18, attendance rates declined to just below the national average, and persistent absence increased slightly. Leaders have suitable systems in place to monitor pupils' attendance, taking prompt and appropriate action to check that pupils who are not in school are safe and accounted for. Their work is bringing attendance figures back to the above-average levels seen previously. Leaders' reviews of emerging patterns in absence figures is not as well developed as their oversight of pupils' academic performance.

### **Inspection findings**

- During this inspection, I focused on: how well leaders and governors ensure the impact of their work, particularly on disadvantaged pupils; how successfully pupils are challenged, especially in writing; and whether pupils' progress is consistently strong from when they join the school in early years. As part of evaluating safeguarding, I also looked at attendance, as well as checking safeguarding systems, culture and record-keeping.
- Staff know the very small number of disadvantaged pupils at Tavistock, like all

pupils at the school, very well. They plan appropriately to meet their learning and wider needs. In some instances, adults' work has had notable impact, such as leading to marked improvements to pupils' attendance. Specific extra help makes a positive difference to disadvantaged pupils' academic progress. However, it does not routinely enable them to do as well as other pupils nationally. Leaders sometimes persevere with their plans to support pupils who most need to catch up, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), without reflecting on whether their actions are making enough of a difference.

- All members of the governing body are newly in post since the last inspection. Together, they make use of helpful support and training from beyond the school to develop their collective effectiveness. Governors work openly with school leaders to check on standards in the school. They keep a careful eye on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. This rightly gives them confidence in leaders' capacity to sustain and raise standards.
- Opportunities for pupils to think and to apply prior learning were evident in the lessons visited during the inspection. Pupils clearly enjoy the challenging activities they participate in, as was seen from their high levels of engagement and good conduct. Several pupils spoke to me proudly about 'grappling with tricky work' but 'getting there in the end!' While the development of deeper thinking as a consistent approach across the school is ongoing, it is undoubtedly emerging through the work pupils are expected to do in class.
- An increased focus on challenging pupils' thinking is evident in their work. The most able pupils make strong progress in writing, from their above-average starting points. The proportions of pupils in Year 2 who are working at a greater depth is now consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, based on their secure starting points, even more pupils should be reaching these higher standards. Those with lower prior attainment make good progress but are not currently catching up with their peers quickly enough.
- Leaders liaise effectively with a wide range of pre-school settings to ensure that they know children well from when they join the school. This helps them to plan successfully to build on children's priorities for development. Typically, children's prior attainment is broadly average when they arrive at the school, although this year's cohort has less well-developed writing skills than previous year groups. Leaders have adapted learning activities in the early years, so that children can improve their fine motor skills to support their handwriting development.
- Children typically make good progress during the early years foundation stage. Over time, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development is consistently above the national average. Increasing numbers of children exceed the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of the Reception Year, demonstrating their strong progress over time.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- current work to raise expectations and deepen thinking enables more pupils to attain a greater depth of learning in writing by the end of key stage 1
- they use monitoring information consistently well to evaluate, refine and develop their actions, so that priority areas, such as the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, improve more rapidly.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Moles  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

We met to discuss a range of relevant issues and consider information provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, safeguarding records and information about pupils' academic performance and attendance. Together, we visited lessons across the school to observe learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. I also met with other staff, including your leader of mathematics, and with groups of pupils and governors, as well as speaking on the telephone with a representative of the local authority. At the start of the day, I spoke informally with some parents in the playground. I considered 106 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 104 free-text comments. I also took 24 responses to the staff survey into account. There were no responses to the pupil survey.