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Ms Helen Bailey
Headteacher
Knowle Park Primary School
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Dear Ms Bailey

Short inspection of Knowle Park Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 February 2019 with Lizzy Meadows, Ofsted Inspector, 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 July 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

There have been significant changes in leadership since the previous inspection. The previous headteacher left at the end of the summer term and governors subsequently appointed you as interim headteacher in September and as substantive headteacher earlier this month. You have won the respect of staff, governors and the wider community in the short time you have been in post. Your leadership is innovative and focused on creating high-quality learning provision throughout the school.

With strong support from your deputy headteacher, you articulate a clear vision for the school and are determined that all pupils receive the best possible education. You set high expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they should behave. You have swiftly identified the key priorities for the school. This, combined with a strong drive for improvement from your senior leadership team and subject leaders, is ensuring that you are urgently responding to the school's recent dip in performance. Staff feel positive about the changes and are wholeheartedly behind your leadership.

To bring about the necessary improvements in the rates of some pupils' learning and progress, you are ensuring that teaching encourages all pupils to become better learners. Pupils who spoke with inspectors were very positive about the school and said they would recommend it to others. 'Teachers help us to learn by making lessons interesting and fun' and 'teachers encourage us to learn from our mistakes and put things right' were positive comments typical of the many made by pupils. These views were echoed by the vast

majority of parents, although a very small minority expressed some concerns regarding bullying. The pupils we spoke to during the day all said that bullying was not a problem and if it did occur they were confident that adults would 'sort it out' for them.

You and your governors have a very good understanding of what the school does well, and what it needs to do to improve. You are acutely aware that pupils' progress in reading and in mathematics has not been as strong as it should. Additionally, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils across the school has not been as good as that of others. Providing greater challenge for all pupils, particularly the disadvantaged, in reading and mathematics, has been the thrust of your work with leaders over the current year, and this is now starting to pay dividends.

At the previous inspection the school was asked to develop the quality of teaching so that pupils make stronger progress and to make sure that pupils act on the advice that teachers give them on how to improve their work. You were also asked to make sure that improvement plans are more precise. Inspectors found that you are ensuring that challenging teaching is currently encouraging pupils to make stronger gains in their learning, particularly at key stage 2. Precise and helpful feedback given to pupils by their teachers is now routinely followed through in all classes and improvement plans are sharper, with clearly identified priorities for improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that effective action is taken to safeguard pupils. Training is up to date, records are meticulously maintained and the pre-employment checks on teachers and other staff are thorough.

You and your staff show vigilance in ensuring that pupils are kept safe and protected. All pupils, but especially those who are vulnerable or at risk, are kept safe as a result of strong pastoral and multi-agency work. Staff make prompt referrals of any concerns, reliably using the school's well-established reporting systems and their comprehensive knowledge of their local community.

You have made sure that pupils have access to a wide range of curriculum, pastoral and online guidance that ensures that they know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. You are watchful of the needs of your vulnerable pupils and any that are 'at risk'. Staff use the full range of information available to them to focus on pupils with the most need, including those at risk of low attendance.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the particular aspects of the school's work on which the inspection would focus. The first line of enquiry considered how well leaders are improving the progress of middle-attaining and disadvantaged pupils in reading and mathematics in key stage 2.
- In 2018, the progress made by middle-attaining and disadvantaged pupils in their reading and mathematics was below that seen nationally. You have set out clear expectations of teachers. This includes to provide more-challenging and demanding

work in mathematics and to expose pupils to more complex reading texts. During the inspection, our learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work showed a consistent level of challenge across the school, especially for middle-attaining and disadvantaged pupils.

- You identified that one of the key reasons for the slower progress in reading is poor development of language skills and a weak vocabulary. During the current year you have introduced a range of strategies to raise teachers' expectations and improve challenge in reading. The number and range of fiction and non-fiction books available to pupils in all classes has greatly increased. Pupils are now developing habits of becoming regular and enthusiastic readers.
- You are developing the curriculum so that it increasingly supports pupils' wider vocabulary and reading skills through lively topic work in history, geography and science. Reading sessions in key stage 2 are exciting and inspiring, and pupils are increasingly able to make sharp and insightful interpretations as to plot and characterisation.
- Across key stage 2, mathematical work is increasingly demanding. All pupils are consistently given opportunities to deepen their understanding of concepts and find new ways of applying ideas. Staff have responded with enthusiasm and determination to make sure that more pupils make stronger gains in mathematics. Work in books shows that an increasing number of pupils are able to solve complex number problems confidently and apply earlier mastered concepts to unfamiliar situations.
- Despite these gains, you and your leaders recognise that still more middle-attaining and disadvantaged pupils should reach the higher standards in their reading and mathematics.
- The next line of enquiry assessed how leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils make stronger progress in key stage 1 and the early years. Along with your senior leaders you have raised teachers' expectations regarding the level of support they provide for disadvantaged pupils. Class teachers are now expected, in the first instance, to provide for these pupils in their classes. They routinely provide a large amount of their time to helping such pupils in class and providing effective interventions to help them catch up if they fall behind in their learning.
- You are also ensuring that the intervention programmes you provide are more carefully planned to support the learning of such pupils. For example, teachers now place the needs of disadvantaged pupils at the forefront of their planning. Across key stage 1 and in Reception, disadvantaged pupils are making stronger progress in reading, writing and mathematics as a result of targeted interventions and a well-planned and carefully designed curriculum.
- The third line of enquiry evaluated how well leaders are improving pupils' attendance. Attendance has been below the national average for similar schools in recent years, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. You are successfully tackling this problem and have reached out to parents of pupils who have difficulty in maintaining good attendance in an empathetic, yet uncompromising, way. You have used a wide range of strategies to make sure that pupils attend school regularly, including timely telephone calls and texts, which are consistently followed up. This is helped by the rewards and celebration of good attendance you promote in assemblies. Leaders have worked sympathetically with families to help remove barriers to regular attendance.

- School data shows that overall attendance now stands at 96.3%, slightly above the national average, and higher than at this time last year. There is little difference in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and that of others.
- The final line of enquiry looked at how well the quality of leadership across the school is enabling more pupils to make stronger gains in their learning. You are tackling the school's recent weaknesses with determination and urgency. With strong support from your deputy headteacher, you are building highly effective teams, including senior leaders and those responsible for subjects and key areas of the school's work.
- You are being supported very well by your knowledgeable governors. They are ambitious for the school and are providing an appropriate balance of support and challenge to you and other school leaders. They understand the importance of holding leaders to account and make sure they are well informed about how well the school is doing.
- Your leadership has ensured that a focus on staff development and training is helping to raise teachers' confidence. Training has empowered teachers to provide more effectively for the learning needs of all pupils. Your closer monitoring of pupils' progress means the tracking of your most vulnerable pupils is now much more effective. Throughout the school, pupils who sometimes find learning a challenge have also made good progress this academic year. In addition, new, practical resources are helping these pupils in particular to develop resilience and greater independence in learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvements to the teaching of reading and mathematics in key stage 2 are consolidated and continued, so that a greater proportion of middle-attaining and disadvantaged pupils make stronger progress
- leaders at all levels embed and closely monitor the new pupil premium strategies so that disadvantaged pupils' progress continues to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, your deputy headteacher, senior leaders, governors and the school improvement adviser from the local authority. Inspectors also met with a group of your subject leaders and your family support worker. We visited classrooms to assess the progress being made by pupils. We looked at pupils' workbooks

and talked with pupils in lessons. Inspectors held a discussion with a group of pupils from Years 5 and 6 and listened to pupils from Years 3 and 6 read. We considered the school's information on the progress being made by current pupils.

Inspectors looked at a range of documentary evidence. This included the school's evaluation of its own performance and plans for improvement. Inspectors looked at various documents related to safeguarding, including the central record and examples of recent referrals made to an external agency. We also assessed current rates of attendance for specific groups of pupils.

We gathered views from parents and took account of 135 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. I received 135 free-text responses and one letter from parents and took account of the 27 results of the staff questionnaires and 100 responses to the pupil survey.