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Mrs Sarah Dibben
Headteacher
Ashley Infant School
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Dear Mrs Dibben

Short inspection of Ashley Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 26 March 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

The leadership of the school is strong. You are a dedicated leader who works tirelessly to ensure that the diverse needs of the pupils at this highly inclusive school are met. Ably supported by your deputy headteacher and staff, you have placed great emphasis on providing support for families and children in the local community. When the local children's centre closed you instigated the opening of 'the hub', where families are given access to, for example, healthcare practitioners, information about the local food bank, and debt management. Through this facility leaders form early relationships, both with parents and with children. This enables a smooth transition into your school and ensures that pupils' individual needs are identified and quickly addressed.

Your self-evaluation processes are detailed, and, as such, you have an accurate view of the school's overall effectiveness. The improvement plans are focused and realistic. As a result, the leadership team and governors have a clear understanding of what actions are needed to improve the school further.

All staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey said that they were proud to work at the school. They also said that they appreciate the opportunities given to them to improve their practice through training and professional reading, which has enabled them to become better practitioners.

Governors share the deep sense of care shown across the school. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. At present, governors closely monitor the school's processes for tracking the progress of pupils. Governors report that this is giving them a real insight into the child behind the data and a greater understanding of the interventions and support that they receive. Governors regularly challenge leaders, for example regarding the progress made by disadvantaged pupils at the school.

Pupils are keen to talk to visitors and to share their work. They told me that they enjoy coming to school and taking part in all the activities that are on offer. They said that they particularly enjoy going on trips to support their topic work, for example to Portchester Castle or Marwell Zoo. During the inspection, pupils' behaviour around the school and in classrooms was very good.

At the time of the previous inspection, inspectors identified that most able pupils were not making the best possible progress in both writing and mathematics. These issues have been addressed by staff receiving focused professional development and by adjustments being made to the curriculum. In mathematics, pupils are given regular access to a variety of rich mathematical tasks and challenges that enable them to apply their knowledge and gain a deeper understanding of mathematics. In writing, leaders identified that many pupils join the school with limited exposure to rich, high-level vocabulary. High-quality texts are now used in each year group and a greater emphasis is placed on pupils using a higher level of vocabulary in their writing. As a result of actions taken so far, the proportion of pupils who are working at a greater depth of understanding by the end of Year 2, in both mathematics and writing, is now well above the national average for pupils generally.

Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school. Every parent who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school to other parents. One parent, reflecting the views of many, remarked: 'All of the staff from the caretaker up through to the headteacher are passionate about ensuring the children here have the best learning experience possible.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You place a high priority on ensuring that pupils are safe. Staff and governors receive regular training to ensure that their knowledge of good practice in safeguarding is kept up to date. Policies and practices are current and fit for purpose and are regularly checked by governors. Leaders also ensure that appropriate checks are made on staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors to the school to ensure their suitability for working with children.

You have established a robust system for staff to report any safeguarding concerns they may have. A review of your records shows that you are swift to access support from other agencies to ensure that concerns about pupils are acted upon and that suitable measures are taken to ensure their well-being.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school and that they know a member of staff will

help them if they are upset or have fallen out with friends. Parents unanimously agree that their children are safe at your school. Pupils and parents receive regular information on how to stay safe online. Leaders also regularly advise parents about the risks associated with children playing computer games designed for older pupils.

Inspection findings

- Attendance has been below the national average for the past two years. The most recent information indicates that attendance is improving but remains slightly below the national average. In addition, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has been consistently above the national average. This proportion is falling but remains higher than the national average. Leaders have implemented many strategies to improve attendance, including picking up pupils from home, issuing fixed-term penalty notices, and involving external support agencies. Actions taken to improve attendance have had a positive effect. There is more work to do, particularly with the families of pupils who are persistently absent.
- The funding received for disadvantaged pupils is used appropriately to ensure that these pupils receive appropriate targeted support to meet their needs. A wide range of highly individualised programmes, delivered by skilled practitioners, ensures that these pupils make at least good progress from their various starting points. Evidence in pupils' books, and the school's information about pupils' progress, supports this view. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 1 also indicate that the difference in performance between these pupils and other pupils nationally has reduced considerably.
- Analysis of the achievement of disadvantaged children who join the school in early years shows that these children make very strong progress by the time they leave in Year 2. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils who join in Year 1 or Year 2 is not so strong. Leaders are currently taking steps to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils make strong progress, by reducing further the gap between the achievement of those pupils and other pupils nationally.
- In addition to the specialised provision unit for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), you also have a high proportion of pupils with SEND in mainstream education. All pupils with SEND are extremely well catered for. You meet the needs of these pupils through carefully monitored, individualised provision which is delivered by dedicated staff and teaching assistants. Staff ensure where possible that all pupils become independent learners. Your highly effective special educational needs coordinator quickly identifies the needs of pupils and, where necessary, commissions appropriate support from outside agencies. You have devised your own system for tracking and monitoring the progress that these pupils make. This information, together with work seen in pupils' books during the inspection, indicates that most pupils with SEND are making strong progress from their starting points.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- rates of attendance match or exceed national averages, with particular focus on those who are persistently absent
- the progress of disadvantaged pupils continues to improve so that the gap between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally reduces further.

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

Brian Macdonald
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you and your deputy to discuss the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement. Together, we observed learning and sampled work in pupils' books in every year group. I held discussions with the SENCo and four members of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I considered documentation relating to safeguarding, pupils' progress and attainment, and governance. I took account of the 30 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 73 responses to Ofsted's confidential online survey, Parent View. I spoke to several parents before school, and considered 67 free-text messages submitted by parents to Ofsted. I talked with pupils formally and during lessons and took account of the 40 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.