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5 April 2019

Mrs Inge Fey
Headteacher
Elmlea Infant School
Elmlea Avenue
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Dear Mrs Fey

No formal designation inspection of Elmlea Infant School

Following my visit with Emma Jelley and Nicola Berry, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 19 to 20 March 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about aspects of the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. They met with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, pupils, parents and representatives of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with two local authority school improvement officers.

Inspectors conducted a range of activities jointly with senior leaders. This included observing lessons, scrutinising the quality of pupils' work, meeting with Year 2 pupils and listening to pupils read. The following three lines of enquiry were evaluated.

- The culture of safeguarding.
- The effectiveness of teaching, including for pupils with special educational needs

and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils.

- The effectiveness of all leaders, including through the quality of the school's curriculum.

Having considered the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Safeguarding is effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders and staff are diligent in their duties. They work well with a range of external agencies to ensure that those who need it receive timely and effective support. Pupils take a lead in conducting safeguarding surveys and also 'follow-up' training, for example in e-safety. The school council has raised its concerns about road safety directly with police. As a result, pupils have a great awareness of how to stay safe in different situations. There were a few minor discrepancies in the record-keeping of checks on staff. However, these were quickly resolved during the inspection.

Context

Elmlea Infant school is a large infant school with three classes in each year group. Currently, there are 270 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils with SEND and those eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The majority of pupils in the school are from a White British background. The school shares a site with Elmlea Junior school. The infant school has received an academy order from the Department for Education (DfE) to gain academy status. Governors have agreed a plan for the infant and junior schools to form a multi-academy trust. The new school is due to open in September 2019. There has been stability in staffing and in the leadership team in recent years.

The school's last inspection was in March 2009 when the school was judged to be outstanding.

The inspection was instigated following a risk assessment of 'exempt' (outstanding) schools, based on the 2018 end of key stage 1 performance data. There appeared to be a significant decline in the standards that pupils reached in reading, writing and mathematics. This included the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards (greater depth). However, the initial risk assessment was based on inaccurate information. The published results were based only on nine lower-achieving pupils rather than the entire cohort of 90 pupils. The subsequent inspection findings confirm that this significant misrepresentation of assessment information is not an accurate reflection of the school's current quality of teaching, learning and assessment. In fact, the results for this cohort were significantly higher than the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils attaining the greater depth standard was also significantly higher than the national average. Pupils attain exceptionally well and make strong progress, continuing a trend of outstanding achievement over time.

You and other leaders, including governors, are meticulous in your work and are ambitious for every pupil. You have developed a united and conscientious staff, who share the school's aims and vision. Elmlea Infants is a happy school. Pupils, staff and parents benefit from excellent relationships within a culture of warmth, respect and care. Consequently, pupils are exceptionally keen to attend and show an appetite for learning. This is reflected in the school's attendance figures, which are significantly higher than similar-sized primary schools. Parents strongly endorse the work of the school. They are effusive in their praise of the school's work. 100% of the 137 responses to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, say they would recommend the school and that it is well led and managed.

You lead the school highly effectively and continue building on its many strengths. You identify and nurture talent within the school and you have instilled confidence and trust in staff so that they feel empowered to take a lead. For example, the middle leadership team, including subject and team leaders, are valued and take an active role in the school improvement review and planning. You have also established rigorous and robust systems for checking pupils' progress. These involve challenging conversations with teachers to ensure the best on behalf of pupils. Leaders, including governors, have well-established systems for holding teachers to account. For example, staff performance is closely linked to the school's priorities, and governors receive comprehensive annual reports. You also have a strong team of senior leaders, including the deputy, special educational needs coordinator and early years leader. They know their areas of responsibility in detail and provide effective support and challenge to team leaders and teachers.

Governors are highly committed and proactive. They check the work of leaders through governor monitoring days and attending meetings with the school's local authority advisers. Governors are curious and probing. They ensure that if they do not understand something, they follow this up to get the knowledge needed to challenge leaders effectively, for example about 'mastery' in mathematics. Governors' plans for school improvement are meticulous and based on an accurate understanding of the pupils' needs. As a result, governors ensure that the school keeps identifying the right areas for improvement. They also 'see these through' to be sure that the plans meet the desired outcomes. For example, following the 2017 outcomes in the early years, where the school dipped marginally below the national benchmarks for a 'good level of development', the governors insisted on a full external review, leading to multiple changes in provision and practice. As a result, the following year, 2018, saw a significant rise in the children's outcomes, including boys' writing, with results increasing to well above the national average. These improvements are currently being sustained in the provision.

You have re-evaluated the quality of the curriculum at Elmlea Infants. Your revised overview of the curriculum is well considered, with a clear rationale to promote a broad knowledge base and related, enjoyable experiences for pupils. Each subject is carefully constructed to deliver learning through promoting 'concepts', 'skills' and

'knowledge'. You understand that these are inter-related and you ensure that learning builds fluently and sequentially to deepen pupils' learning in the range of subjects. As part of the inspection, we looked at the curriculum through the teaching of English and mathematics and through other subjects, particularly computing. Inspectors found that pupils are enjoying a broad range of activities, problems and challenges. Pupils are acquiring different skills that can be applied to different situations. This ensures that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education. You have also revised the topic choices to appeal more to boys. This is particularly effective and seen, for example, in Reception boys writing intricate accounts about space exploration, using ambitious vocabulary.

You have maintained highly effective teaching, learning and assessment across the school. You ensure that leaders and teachers have a thorough understanding of the needs of different classes and cohorts. This enables teachers to plan comprehensively to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Pupils with SEND and other vulnerable pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, have personalised plans to help them overcome specific barriers. Other adults, such as learning support assistants (LSAs), contribute well to these plans and provide useful assessment information. However, there are some examples when the targets set by teachers are not sufficiently refined. This means that for a few pupils, targets are too broad and hold back their learning.

Inspectors evaluated how well reading, phonics and writing are taught, including in the early years. You ensure that there is a robust, daily phonics programme. Teachers and teaching assistants understand phonics progression and development well. For example, adults ensure that reading books are well matched to pupils' phonics knowledge and ability. Adults have strong subject knowledge and ensure that children get off to a 'flying start' in the Reception Year. This is sustained as pupils progress through the school. By the time they leave, pupils read with fluency and enjoyment. Similarly, pupils write for a range of real-life reasons and audiences. These provide an incentive for pupils to write to a high standard in different subjects. However, teachers do not ensure that pupils' presentation, including the quality of handwriting, is routinely of the highest quality. This mars pupils' work, particularly in their topic books. In key stage 1, teachers are not consistently tackling weaknesses in pupils' spelling. Despite pupils' strong phonics knowledge and awareness of common spelling patterns, such as prefixes and suffixes, this knowledge is not used and applied consistently during independent writing.

External support

Leaders and governors work effectively with other schools and local authority school improvement partners to keep improving the school. Governors commission services, such as educational welfare support and health and safety audits, to identify and target areas for improvement. External checks and challenges ensure that leaders are continually striving for improvement. The school has been identified through the local authority as a 'service leader'. This means that it is providing

effective support to others, including the headteacher working one day a week in a local school that is judged to 'require improvement'.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils improve their handwriting and presentation skills to a high standard in a range of situations and subjects
- pupils apply their strong knowledge of phonics and spelling patterns to correct spelling errors when editing their writing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and 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

Stewart Gale

Her Majesty's Inspector