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Mrs J Beale  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Beale

### **Short inspection of Kingsway Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 21 May 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 May 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, there have been some significant changes at the school. When you took up your post as headteacher in September 2017, it was clear that the school had been in a period of decline and pupils' achievement had fallen.

Throughout 2018, there have been a number of changes to leadership roles and teaching staff positions. You are fully aware of how unsettling this time has been for your community but are dedicated to providing the very best for pupils. All staff positions are effectively filled and, this year, the school is in a more stable and improving position. Throughout this period of change, the local authority has provided effective support and training for all leaders and staff.

Governors are dedicated to the success of the school. However, since the previous inspection they have not been as effective as they should in holding the school to account for the quality of education provided. It is clear that, currently, governors receive better information about pupils' achievement than they have in the past. Improvements in the effectiveness of governance are starting to be made but governors would benefit from a review of their work to help them identify what they could do to improve in their role.

Since starting as headteacher, you have rightly focused on raising pupils' achievement, so that pupils can be better prepared for the demands of secondary school. You and your leadership team have managed to halt the decline in pupils' progress in all three subjects that had been evident since the previous inspection. In 2018, by the end of Year 6, more pupils reached the required standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined than previously. Currently pupils in Year 6 are making good progress to reach the nationally required and higher standards of which they are capable.

Leaders are enthusiastic for their roles and responsibilities. They are making a difference to the quality of education provided and the ongoing training of staff. All staff who responded to the online questionnaire stated that they are proud to work at the school, receive suitable professional development and are encouraged and respected by school leaders. Teachers who are newly qualified are effectively provided with the time and expertise of other teachers and leaders.

One of the many strengths of the school is the relationships that pupils have with the adults in class. Pupils explain their learning easily and well, expressing their views with increasingly mature vocabulary. They relish the many opportunities provided to develop their leadership skills in roles such as the school council or as head boy and girl. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities and pupils benefit from the swimming pool that is on site. Nearly all pupils who responded to the online questionnaire and all pupils spoken with enjoy learning and feel safe and well cared for at Kingsway Junior School.

One of the indications of your strong leadership is how well you deal with challenges. The many changes of staff have had an impact on how well parents understand the work of the school. Their responses to Parent View are mixed, especially around how well leaders have dealt with some historical behaviour issues. From your detailed records, it is clear that parental concerns are taken seriously and dealt with effectively.

Many parents clearly appreciate the improvements that are being made and how their children are happy, safe and well cared for. One parent summed up the sentiments of others by saying: 'My child has always been happy in school and felt well looked after. I cannot speak more highly about the staff and management'.

You have an accurate view of the current strengths and weaknesses. You are ably supported by your deputy headteacher and other leaders. Together, you are determined that the rapid improvements that are under way will continue so that the school remains good at its next inspection.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The designated safeguarding leaders take appropriate precautions to ensure that pupils are safe at school. There is a well-established and strong safeguarding culture, underpinned by training and developing staff and governors in the most up-to-date national safeguarding

guidance.

Records of the checks made on staff before they are recruited are thorough and kept up to date. Similarly, systems for recording child protection concerns are effective and monitored regularly. You work well with external agencies when required.

The vast majority of parents value the high priority staff place on ensuring that their children are safe and well looked after. Pupils have a mature understanding of what bullying is and what it is not. Those spoken with could confidently name an adult that they would speak with if they had concerns. These pupils were also confident that adults would deal well with any concerns they had. However, this view was not held by all pupils and parents. A small group of pupils and parents, who responded to their questionnaires, lack confidence that adults deal well with situations of bullying or individual concerns.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry was to consider whether the quality of teaching in reading, linked with grammar, punctuation and spelling, is good enough for pupils to achieve well. This is because in 2018, the proportion of pupils who reached the required standard in grammar, punctuation and spelling by the end of Year 6 was below that found nationally.
- Leadership of English is strong, and you have made great strides in improving the quality of teaching in reading over the last year. There is an accurate view of where the strengths and continued areas for improvement lie. There are clear plans to make reading central to the overall curriculum and improve the specific teaching and use of vocabulary in all curriculum subjects.
- Teachers carefully choose texts that match pupils' reading abilities and interests for specific reading lessons. Year 6 confidently read aloud in class. Many Year 6 pupils speak about how this approach has helped them make better progress over the year. Similarly, in Year 5, pupils maturely and accurately explained similarities and differences between two well-chosen texts about the Second World War.
- In Year 3, teachers have adapted the curriculum this year, so that pupils consolidate their knowledge, understanding and skills in phonics. You are seeing the benefits of your approach this year. This is helping these pupils make good progress in both reading and understanding spelling rules when they write.
- Pupils' books demonstrate a wealth of writing over the course of the year and across the curriculum. However, the quality of presentation, handwriting and spelling for disadvantaged pupils was not as strong as all pupils. Some adults are not expecting the same high quality or providing the specific support these pupils need to improve. This results in these pupils having more ground to make up by the time they get to Year 6. Not enough disadvantaged pupils reach greater depth by the time they reach Year 6.
- My next line of enquiry was to consider the quality of teaching in mathematics.

This was because inspectors identified mathematics in the previous inspection as a subject to improve.

- The teaching of mathematics has improved over time. Pupils enjoy their lessons in mathematics and they can explain their reasoning well. In 2018, the proportion of pupils who reached the required standard was higher than the national average. From the standard of work in Year 6 pupils' books, they are making good progress in their work and are set to achieve well at the required standard this academic year.
- Leadership of mathematics is strong. Through regular training of staff and rigorous monitoring, you ensure that the quality and consistency of teaching in mathematics is now a strength of the school. Teachers and support staff use clear and effective explanations to help pupils understand new methods. They give pupils good-quality resources to use during lessons and pupils are becoming increasingly independent in their learning.
- At times, the most able pupils have to complete too many calculations of the same demand before they can move on to the next challenge, or they are taught a strategy or method in a way that is not as well matched to their ability. Pupils work diligently in the one or two classes where this happens. However, more could be expected so that the most able pupils are consistently using and applying their mathematical knowledge and skills at their level.
- My final line of enquiry was to consider whether pupils attend well. This was because there has been a three-year declining trend in attendance. In 2018, it was 94.7% and below the national average.
- You are determined to improve pupils' attendance at school, and work on improving attendance and reducing persistent absenteeism is starting to bear fruit. You are working carefully with the local authority attendance officer to offer both support and challenge to parents to improve attendance. Through the work of the family worker you continue to build effective relationships with parents who require more specific support.
- You promote good attendance through your weekly newsletter, where you celebrate those classes where attendance is strong. Attendance so far this year is improving. This academic year, pupils' attendance overall is nearly in line with the national average. There are many examples of pupils who have been persistently absent and who now attend school more regularly. More could still be achieved by having a greater analysis of where pupils do not attend well so that leaders' efforts can be even more effectively targeted.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors commission an external review of their work to help them strengthen how well they hold leaders to account for the quality of education
- more parents and older pupils regain confidence in leaders and governors to respond to concerns, especially incidents of bullying
- the school provides the most able pupils with more opportunities to use and

apply their mathematics skills in a range of different ways so that they can excel

- disadvantaged pupils present their work well and more are effectively supported to reach the required and higher standard by the time they reach Year 6.
- the school continues to improve pupils' attendance so that it is more consistently in line with the national average.

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

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher, middle leaders, the chair of governors and two other governors. We visited classes to observe pupils learning. I evaluated the quality of pupils' achievement by considering work in their books across differing abilities in mathematics, English and other subjects.

I spoke with pupils informally in classrooms and when walking around the school site during break and lunch times. I observed pupils as they moved around the school between lessons.

Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined along with the school's record of checks carried out on staff working at the school. I analysed and discussed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.

I considered 26 responses to Parent View and the comments parents made using the online 'freetext' service. I evaluated 14 staff responses and 50 responses from pupils to their online questionnaire.