

10 June 2019

Mrs Amanda Dhillon
Headteacher
Sandfield Close Primary School
Sandfield Close
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Leicestershire
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Dear Mrs Dhillon

Short inspection of Sandfield Close Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 June 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 December 2015.

This school continues to be good.

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

The school is an orderly yet vibrant learning community where good teaching is thriving. Pupils make consistently strong progress in their reading, writing, mathematics and science. They leave Sandfield Close well prepared for secondary school.

Staff work well together. They feel that leaders support them in their roles, treat them with respect, and are mindful of their workload. Those who were present at the last inspection feel that the quality of education in the school has improved considerably. Like you, staff have high expectations for all pupils. They expect them to listen carefully, work hard and to follow instructions quickly and pupils do so. They are cooperative and keen to answer the questions that teachers ask them. Teachers skilfully address any misconceptions pupils may have, and they help them to correct any errors they make. Staff know pupils well, and this allows them to meet their needs effectively.

Pupils are very familiar with the school's 'golden rules'. They respect others and value their different backgrounds and cultures. One pupil explained to me that they are taught to 'treat others as you would wish to be treated'. Others told me how they are proud to be part of the school, and that staff care for them and listen to what they say. British values, such as the rule of law and democracy, are taught throughout the school. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

You have addressed effectively all the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The teaching of reading, for example, has improved considerably. Reading is now a priority and is taught very effectively so that pupils can access all subjects of the curriculum, and so they make it their priority. As a result, pupils quickly catch up from their starting points.

Staff in the early years are aware that children's skills in speaking and writing are below those usually found in children of a similar age. They speak clearly to the children, modelling good language and using new words and phrases so that they will learn them quickly. Children then introduce these words and phrases into their writing.

Teachers use an effective system to give feedback to pupils. Pupils say that it helps them to understand what they have done well, and how to improve particular aspects of their work. They were keen to tell me how the WAGOLL ('What A Good One Looks Like') boards in classrooms help them to see examples of the standard of work that teachers expect them to produce. The large majority of pupils complete their work with a sense of pride. They know that teachers will make them repeat it if their work is untidy or rushed. Pupils are pleased to be awarded a 'star hand writer' award, and value the letter that is sent to their parents to confirm that they have received a 'pen licence'.

The school is rightly proud of its leading work in the teaching of science. It holds two Gold Level Quality Marks for the subject and in 2017 was the winner of the STEM (science, technology, English and mathematics) primary school of the year. The science leader is a national expert and organises training to support colleagues in schools across Leicester. Visits from palaeontologists and experts such as Professor Brian Cox, together with exciting and very well-planned lessons, mean that pupils are highly enthused to learn scientific knowledge, and can plan and conduct investigations independently and with proficiency.

You now have a much-improved overview of the assessment and recording systems staff use, and you evaluate the effectiveness of different subjects efficiently. You can draw astute conclusions about the performance of groups of pupils across year groups, such as girls' attainment in mathematics in Year 5. This ensures that staff are accountable for the progress pupils make. The governing body performs its strategic role well. You ensure that governors are given regular access to useful data and reports, which allow them to ask you questions about different aspects of the school's provision and performance. You have, rightly, prioritised developing the core subjects of reading, writing, mathematics, and science. However, you have not monitored as precisely the design and implementation of the curriculum in other subjects, and have planned a review of this, beginning next term.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. There is a clear culture of vigilance within the school, and staff understand fully their duties to help keep pupils safe. You ensure that they are well trained in safeguarding,

including information in areas of very recent national concern, such as county lines. Staff are alert to a wide range of signs that a pupil is being exploited. Staff are very aware of the different types of abuse that exist. They do not hesitate to report any concerns to you. You, in turn, keep effective records which allow you to see trends over time. Any referrals to outside agencies are made briskly.

All parents who responded to Parent View believe that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils I met confirmed that they felt safe in school, and that the very small amount of bullying or name-calling is dealt with fairly and quickly by staff. Pupils are taught how to protect themselves against different risks to their safety, such as busy roads, strangers, and deep water. Almost all pupils learn to swim at least 25 metres by the time they leave the school.

Inspection findings

- Children enter the school in the Reception Year with skills that are lower than those typically found, with around one in three children having particularly low skills across all areas of learning. Staff help children to catch up quickly so that, for example, their ability to read is broadly in line with the national average by the time they begin Year 1.
- Good phonics teaching results in pupils developing good strategies to pronounce unfamiliar words. Daily 'read aloud' sessions develop their comprehension skills well and improve their vocabulary. Teachers show pupils how authors use repetition and inferred meaning for effect. Pupils also enjoy books. For example, in Year 1 they read classic stories such as 'Jack and the Beanstalk', while those in Year 6 devour Carnegie Medal-winning texts such as Neil Gaiman's 'The Graveyard Book'.
- Staff are highly skilled at teaching writing, and the proportions of pupils who attain the higher standard in this subject at the end of key stage 2 are consistently significantly above the national average. Pupils' writing is characterised by confident and imaginative use of language, with accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils in Year 5 write sentences such as, 'They stood there, sapphire-blue eyes bulging and gaping in motionless amazement.'
- Pupils make very strong gains in mathematics. Teachers ensure that they develop fluency in the rules of number, and have a quick and accurate recall of multiplication tables.
- By the end of key stage 2, the proportions who attain at least the expected standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science are consistently above those seen nationally. This is because the progress that pupils make in key stage 2 is above, and often well above, that seen nationally across different subjects. Workbooks in these subjects of pupils currently in the school confirm that their progress is consistently at least good, and is often substantial.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced in all year groups, including Year 6. Pupils explained that work is not only challenging for them, but interesting. Pupils particularly enjoy occasions such as the 'space camp' when they stay in school at

night to use telescopes with the help of professional astronomers to view stars.

- Although there is much excellent teaching in English, mathematics and science, leaders have focused less on ensuring that this occurs in other subjects, such as history and geography. Leaders do not check with the same rigour across all subjects to ensure that the curriculum is delivered to promote outstanding achievement for pupils in these subjects.
- Pupils' overall attendance has been broadly in line with the national average for the past three years. Persistent absence rose last year, however, and was particularly high for those pupils who are disadvantaged. Effective work to support and challenge those parents who were not bringing their children to school regularly enough has helped to quickly reverse this trend. Persistent absence is now lower than that found typically in other schools. Pupils enjoy coming to school and like receiving school rewards for regular attendance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the planned review of the curriculum for subjects other than English, mathematics and science is carried out and subsequent action taken where necessary, so that leaders can be sure that knowledge is taught effectively across all subjects and year groups.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with the chair of the governing body, the subject leader for science, and the deputy headteacher, who is the head of the early years and leader for English and mathematics. I scrutinised the responses of parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and read all free-text comments. I analysed the responses to Ofsted staff questionnaire. I toured the school to visit almost all year groups as they were receiving lessons. You accompanied me on most of these visits. I looked at samples of work in different subjects for pupils across all year groups, including the disadvantaged. I observed children's behaviour in lessons and as they moved about the school. I met with a group of pupils to hear their views about the school and the education they receive. I viewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's current performance and plans for its further

improvement. I considered a number of policy documents, including those for safeguarding. I examined the school's website to check that it meets the requirements on the publication of specified information.