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Mrs Rachel Edwards
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Edwards

Short inspection of Stonehouse Park Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 3 October 2017, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have overseen a number of staffing changes and maintained a sharp focus on improving standards. The promotion of three teachers to middle leaders has strengthened leadership and driven forward the improvements that you and governors have rightly prioritised.

Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils has risen and governors have brought the pre-school under your leadership to ensure that the youngest children receive high-quality teaching.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the outcomes for the most able pupils. Much work has gone into improving the quality of pupils' writing and providing opportunities that deepen their understanding in all subjects. The most able pupils write in a variety of styles and are particularly effective in writing persuasively, for example, encouraging Mr McGregor to be kind to Peter Rabbit. In mathematics, your 'skill, deepen, apply' approach is providing the most able pupils with the structure and challenge they need to reach the higher standards. The 2017 key stage 1 assessments show that an increased number of pupils were working above the expectations for their age.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils are well versed in the risks that they might face. Staff have ensured that they know how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils in Year 1 were very clear about how to protect their identity when they are online. They were equally clear about playing safely and what to do if there was a fire.

Staff are appropriately trained and use their knowledge to be vigilant. When staff are concerned about a pupil, they are swift to raise this with you, as the designated safeguarding leader, or with your deputy. You draw on a wide range of support for pupils and their families. As a result of your approach, parents have confidence in the school. They know, whenever they call, you or a colleague will listen, support and take appropriate action.

You use 'early help' very effectively. When it is necessary to make a referral to the local authority, the referrals are timely and demonstrate the need for the referral. You track and monitor each referral carefully and chase up other agencies when progress is slow. Records are well maintained and fit for purpose.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I focused on the progress made by the middle-ability pupils in writing and mathematics in key stage 1. This was identified as a weakness following the key stage 1 assessments in 2016. Teachers have high expectations. They plan a range of opportunities which challenge these pupils to reach and sometimes exceed the standard expected for their age. Teachers' use of exciting stimuli is encouraging these pupils to write in a range of styles. Pupils routinely edit their writing to increase the reader's interest and correct grammatical errors. In mathematics, teaching staff focus on improving pupils' speed when calculating. As a result, pupils make strong progress from their starting points. In 2017, the proportion of pupils who reached the standard expected by the end of key stage 1 was only slightly lower than the national figures.
- The second area I explored was the impact that pupil premium funding is having for disadvantaged pupils. The use of additional funding to ensure that these pupils have the same experiences as other pupils is helping them to develop their understanding of the world. Learning is carefully planned. Teaching staff use these experiences to stimulate higher quality writing. Where teachers notice that disadvantaged pupils are not secure in a particular aspect of their work, they quickly arrange support. Interventions are timely and show marked impact, particularly with respect to strengthening pupils' phonic knowledge and their spelling. In all years, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and from their often very low starting points. Some disadvantaged pupils make more rapid progress than their classmates.
- I also explored the quality of boys' writing in Reception. This was because, for several years, fewer boys have achieved the early learning goal in writing than in other areas of the curriculum. When children start in Reception, they often have poor speech and language skills. Many are also very immature in their social and

emotional development. Using accurate assessments, teachers skilfully plan learning activities which help children develop their self-confidence and resilience.

- Children's learning journals for the previous academic year show that once children are more self-assured, they approach their writing with confidence and make very rapid progress. Many children, who were making basic marks on entry, were able to write in clear sentences by the end of the year. Children who were very shy at the start of term have quickly settled into school. They were keen to speak with me and tell me about what they are doing and learning. I noted that teaching assistants do not pick up on children's poor pronunciation and so their spoken communication is not as clear as it should be. This has a knock-on effect when children start to write, because they mix up initial letter sounds. Similarly, staff do not capitalise on the many opportunities to reinforce children's fine motor skills when they are in sessions when they choose their own activities.
- As governors have recently taken on responsibility for the management of the on-site nursery, I explored how well they ensure that the provision is of a high quality. I also confirmed that the early years welfare standards are met. Relationships with children's families are particularly strong. The leader of Nursery provision coordinates a wide range of groups and activities to help parents support their child.
- Children are happy and enjoy their time in Nursery. Leaders acknowledge that Nursery is a priority for improvement. However, the detached location of one Nursery class and the poor standard of accommodation for the other classes are hampering leaders' plans. Nursery classes are also physically remote from Reception classes, and so the opportunities for good practice to be shared are restricted. The outdoor space which children use in 'free-flow' sessions is small and there are few opportunities for children to build their strength and develop their dexterity.
- There is considerable variability in the quality of teaching and learning. Some staff do not routinely encourage the children to think about what they are doing and consider the learning. This is a new venture for governors and they acknowledge that they need to develop a keener interest in this.
- Finally, I reviewed pupils' attendance. Over recent years, attendance has fluctuated. Staff are swift to identify any potential barriers to pupils attending school regularly. They have actively supported parents in improving their child's attendance, including through external agencies that are well placed to help them. Persistent absence has fallen dramatically. As a result, attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with the rates typically seen nationally, and no groups of pupils now cause concern.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- staff in the Nursery provision are suitably trained and skilled to ensure that the children make strong progress in all areas of learning

- children in Reception make the same progress in their communication skills and writing as they do in the rest of the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Iain Freeland
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, you joined me in observing learning in all year groups. We looked at the work of a number of pupils along with your senior leaders. I spoke with pupils in lessons and while they were playing at lunchtime. I met with a number of parents at the start of the day. Meetings were held with you, senior leaders, an officer of the local authority and six governors.

I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation and development plan, assessment information and safeguarding records. I considered the views of 47 parents who responded to Parent View and the responses of 21 members of staff to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.