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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mr Andy Bridewell
Headteacher
Ludgershall Castle Primary School
Ludgershall
Andover
Hampshire
SP11 9RB

Dear Mr Bridewell

Short inspection of Ludgershall Castle Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 February 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 February 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 focused closely and effectively on reducing pupils' absence and improving teaching, both actions for improvement identified by the last inspection. Attendance has risen rapidly since 2013 and is now above average for all groups of pupils. You check closely on the quality of teaching, making sure teachers are given clear improvement points whenever they are observed by leaders. You showed me how these points are systematically followed up. The training provided to teachers is helping them to improve their teaching or leadership.

As we watched pupils learning on the morning of the inspection, you identified strengths and weaknesses and explained to me how you and other leaders were developing teaching in a range of classes. Without exception, we saw pupils happily and closely focused on their work. Teachers were checking on pupils' understanding and they or teaching assistants frequently returned to work with any who had not grasped a concept first time. Pupils knew exactly what they had to do and what they were trying to learn. One pupil summed up their learning, saying, 'We have loads of fun lessons.'

You spoke powerfully about your drive to make sure all children have opportunities to succeed as well as they can. The pupils told me enthusiastically about the school

motto: 'Learn, have fun, succeed'. You ensure that disadvantaged pupils do well. Last year these pupils had higher attendance than others nationally and others in the school. The 2016 Year 6 results showed that disadvantaged pupils had made better progress than their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. This is partly because of the very carefully chosen support work you do, but also because teachers pay close attention to disadvantaged pupils in lessons. They make sure that these pupils, especially, are questioned and supported well.

You and the governors concentrate on pupils' attainment when you are evaluating the success of the school. Your new system for tracking exactly what pupils can do is being followed by teachers and gives you good information. You rightly give weight to making sure that as many pupils as possible reach the standards they should for their age. One of the strengths of the school is the way you are directing extra support towards helping pupils who are working just below this level to catch up. However, concentrating on attainment rather than progress has meant that you have not always fine-tuned your targets for improvement, for example concerning which gender might need to do better.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your governors and the staff are committed to keeping pupils as safe as possible. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. You provide training to make sure staff are up to date with guidance. You keep a close track of training attended and make sure that all staff have read the documents they should. A range of staff, with different roles, were able to tell me about their training and what they look out for. Accident reports are appropriately kept and swift action is taken when needed.

Pupils I spoke to and almost all parents who responded to the online survey said that the school is a safe place. The pupils said that behaviour was good and there was no bullying. They know who to go to if they need help and are sure something would be done. They know how to keep themselves safe, for example, when using the internet or a mobile phone. Pupils respect staff, and classrooms are secure, happy places.

Governors have checked to make sure timely action is taken when a child is identified to be at risk. They are very aware of hidden ways in which a child could be harmed and have focused on establishing the ethos of 'a telling school', meaning that no-one should be afraid to raise issues, however small they seem.

Inspection findings

- To be sure that the school remained good, one of my key lines of enquiry was about progress in key stage 2. You had a successful drive to improve writing last year. In the 2015 Year 6 results, progress in writing was the weakest of the three key subjects – reading, writing and mathematics – but in 2016 it was much the best. However, progress in mathematics was below average in 2016.

- You analysed the reasons for the variations in mathematics results, realising that pupils who received targeted support did well. In mathematics lessons, we saw staff now concentrating effectively on making sure all pupils really understood the mathematics and were not just learning a 'method' that they might forget.
- You had not analysed the progress of the current Year 6 across the key stage. We looked at the standards individuals had reached at the end of key stage 1 and compared them to the standards they are reaching now. The large majority have made good progress through the key stage. However, some who could be working at greater depth are not yet doing so. The national curriculum is new, and you initially prioritised making sure that pupils reached standards expected for their age. You are aware that work towards greater depth has yet to be fully developed in a variety of subjects.
- Another line of enquiry concerned achievement in the early years. Data provided during the inspection shows that between entry and the assessments in the summer of 2016, children made very good progress. I looked closely at the accuracy of the school's assessments, talking them through with the teachers, and was satisfied that they were accurate. Over the last few years, the school has worked to improve planning and teaching in the early years. During the inspection I saw a good focus on basic skills, not only in formal teaching but also in the activities children choose for themselves.
- A third line of enquiry was to investigate why few pupils who had reached expected standards when they left Reception went on to reach greater depth by the end of Year 2. I queried whether, with a push, these pupils could do better. However, your assessment records showed that most of the pupils who reached expected standards in Reception had, one year before, been below the standards for their age. They had made rapid progress to reach the goals expected at the end of Reception. They had consolidated their skills and knowledge in Year 1 but few had been in a position to make immediate further improvement.
- The most able pupils currently in Year 2 are being challenged. I spoke to and checked the literacy work of a sample of pupils who had exceeded some, though not all, of the Reception goals. I found that they were doing well, carrying out work that is leading them towards reaching greater depth. However, the school is not routinely identifying pupils who, from their Reception results, could be pushed to attain such depth in their work.
- The results of the Year 1 phonics screening check were good in 2016. However, not all of the current Year 3 cohort reached the phonics standard, even by the end of Year 2. A comparatively high proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities in this year group. My final line of enquiry was to look closely at the way the school is providing for them. It is doing so effectively.
- When the school decides to use a particular method of support, or intervention, it checks that this is working. It looks for rapid impact on the group chosen for the intervention, before continuing. Where the intervention is working in general but has not improved the attainment of an individual, the school changes the approach for that pupil. You and I agreed that the school is much better at looking at the impact of these short-term interventions than it is at tracking progress over the longer term.

- As we investigated these lines of enquiry there were some occasions when you rightly felt that things were now going well, but you could not quickly lay your hands on material to be sure. For example, the evidence on special educational needs existed but was kept by teachers or middle leaders. I am therefore recommending that you tighten the way you develop and maintain an oversight of the good work other leaders are doing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- when they set targets and analyse how well the school is doing, they pay close attention to the progress pupils make from their starting points as well as the standards they reach
- the school continues to focus on improving mathematics and on developing work at greater depth across all subjects
- more effective systems are established for you, as headteacher, to check on the quality of what is happening in areas of responsibility delegated to other leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Deborah Zachary
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and discussed the school's self-evaluation and improvements since the last inspection. Together, we visited a range of classes to observe pupils' learning. I spoke to pupils during lessons, asked them to read to me and looked at their work. I spoke to them informally during playtime and also met formally with a group to gather their views. I took account of 51 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, together with a range of written comments from parents.

I analysed a range of school documentation, including plans, school policies and safeguarding procedures. I studied information about the attainment of pupils, and together we used this to look in detail at pupils' progress. I met with the early years leader and another teacher, and talked informally with other staff. I met a group of governors, including the chair. I also spoke by telephone to an adviser from the local authority.