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Mr Justin Godding
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Godding

Short inspection of Isbourne Valley School

Following my visit to the school on 4 April 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The school's leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to this small school, including locating the school on one site and your appointment as headteacher. As headteacher, you demonstrate a very clear commitment to improving the outcomes that pupils achieve. You have successfully built an ethos for the school that staff and governors share. Teachers and support staff feel strongly that they are part of a team and that their contributions are listened to and valued. While raising expectations of teachers, you have ensured that the support and challenge you provide for them means they are keen to continue to improve their practice. Teachers know they will be held to account for the progress pupils make, but they also know that you will support them in undertaking new initiatives. You have open lines of communication with parents and an evident commitment to ensuring that their children achieve the best. This means that parents are sure any concerns will be listened to and firmly believe the school is well led and managed.

Safeguarding is effective.

School staff know the pupils in their care and their families very well. Leaders, including governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and up to date. Regular training means that staff and governors know what is expected of them. They are very clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Safeguarding is central to the role of the governing body and they monitor carefully the school's work to keep pupils safe.

The school's systems make sure new staff are recruited safely and the induction process places emphasis on the strong culture of safeguarding which the school promotes.

Pupils overwhelmingly say they feel safe in school. They are very clear that they know who to talk to if they have a worry or concern and that adults will help them. Parents very strongly agree that their children are happy, safe and well looked after in school. Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying and say this does not happen often. The vast majority of parents agree. The school's curriculum helps pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when using new technologies such as the internet. Pupils talked about practical examples of the steps they can take to keep themselves safe online.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to check how leaders are ensuring effective provision for writing in the school. In the most recent Year 6 tests, pupils made slightly less progress in writing than pupils nationally, although their progress in reading was much higher than the national level. Leaders have increased the expectations of what is required in writing with the result that standards of handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar have improved rapidly, particularly in key stage 2. Pupils, including boys, disadvantaged pupils and the most able, are keen to write. During the inspection, pupils talked to me with enthusiasm and pride about their writing. For example, some shared with me the impact of their editing in response to their teacher's careful feedback on how to improve their work.
- My second line of enquiry was to check what the school is doing to ensure effective provision for pupils in key stage 1. As headteacher you have made changes to the organisation and structure of the large key stage 1 and Reception class. You have been clear in increasing the expectations placed on pupils and adults. This means that the learning pupils receive in key stage 1 is better matched to their needs. You know that improvements are still needed in aspects of pupils' written work such as spelling and handwriting and have put in place skilful support from the leader for English. Pupils' work shows that they are now catching up in these areas. In the early years, children are acquiring the skills they need in early reading, writing and mathematics to make a sound start to the learning they will meet in Year 1. For example, children in the Reception Year can use their phonics skills to write simple sentences.
- Next, I looked at how governors and leaders managed the transition from a leadership partnership with the local secondary school. Governors provide a strong strategic direction for the school. They have a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for further development. They have not shied away from taking some difficult decisions that have put the school on a sound financial and educational footing for the future. They challenge the standards pupils achieve and monitor and gather information for themselves during their visits to the school. Governors have ensured that the funding for disadvantaged pupils has been well spent. Disadvantaged pupils, including those currently in the school, make good progress, sometimes achieving better than other pupils nationally by the end of key stage 2, particularly in reading and mathematics. Parents are

firmly of the view that their children are well taught and making good progress. They say you have 'gathered everyone together' with your open, fair and firm manner.

- Finally, I looked at the impact of leaders' work to maintain pupils' high attendance. The attendance of pupils continues to be above that of pupils nationally. The attendance of pupils who have been absent the most is improving so that their attendance is now close to that of all pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the improvements in pupils' writing continue so that more can write at the highest level
- pupils can use their writing skills to write at length in different curriculum subjects.

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

Sarah O'Donnell
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and we talked about developments in the school since the last inspection. I looked at safeguarding records and tested out your recruitment and vetting procedures. I held discussions with governors, including the chair of governors. I talked to teachers and support staff. Together, we visited lessons and carried out a learning walk across the school. I observed pupils during breaktime and lunchtime. I met with a group of pupils to talk about their life at school and heard a group of pupils read. I considered the 24 responses to Ofsted's online survey, 'Parent View', and the 22 comments submitted. I met with parents as they arrived at the school, and received a letter from a parent.