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Mrs Debra Redpath
Headteacher
Rowner Infant School
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Dear Mrs Redpath

Short inspection of Rowner Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 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. High aspirations and expectations are evident throughout the school. Staff value your clear vision and unwavering determination to keep raising standards. They work effectively together to achieve this, so that pupils are ready for their next steps in learning, regardless of their starting points. The effective leadership modelled by you, your deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator extends across the whole staff, so that everyone plays their part in improving the school for the benefit of the pupils.

Rowner Infant School is a safe and happy place. Children joining the early years settle in quickly, because staff invest successfully in getting to know them and their families quickly. Parents spoke highly of how well their children are cared for by adults in the school, and how this supports pupils' academic progress. You provide rich and valuable opportunities for parents to come into school to see and share in their children's learning. Consequently, parents and teachers work together increasingly closely to help pupils to make good progress.

Pupils are confident and well behaved. They work and play well together. Pupils say that teachers are kind and help them with their learning. In lessons and around the school, clearly established routines help pupils to learn. This was shown well during the inspection by how readily pupils have adapted to the changes in, and challenges of, the physical environment during the current building work.

Since the last inspection in 2013, you and your team have worked hard to keep improving the school. Leaders have invested successfully in sharing the strong practice in teaching that was evident across the school. Teaching and non-teaching staff work closely together to plan learning activities based accurately on pupils' needs. Staff are held effectively to account for the difference their work makes, through regular and supportive discussions about how well pupils are achieving, academically and pastorally. As a result, staff demonstrate clear ownership of the targets they work towards. They feel supported by each other and by opportunities for coaching and training that help them to improve their work.

Pupils make good progress and achieve secure outcomes in writing by the end of key stage 1. However, pupils' achievements in writing are not as strong as their above-average performance in reading and mathematics. Your whole team is focused on continuing to move this aspect of learning forward, to enhance pupils' life chances in the longer term.

The proportion of pupils whose circumstances might make them vulnerable is above average in your school. These pupils are supported well to make rapid progress from their typically low starting points. Actions to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are leading to less pupils being persistently absent. However, there is more work to do to improve their attendance further, so that all pupils come to school regularly and make rapid progress in their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils' welfare is a key consideration for everyone involved in the life of the school. Pupils feel safe and are looked after well. Staff and governors understand their safeguarding duties, and are supported effectively by appropriate policies and training, and by useful systems. Staff are vigilant in identifying any concerns about a child, no matter how small. They pass on what they know to leaders, who take appropriate and prompt action. Consequently, additional support from experts beyond the school is accessed quickly when needed. Leaders keep careful records of reported concerns and the actions they lead to, and review them regularly. This helps to ensure that no vital information is missed and that potentially vulnerable pupils are cared for well.

Staff work closely and creatively with pupils and their families to deal with issues that might present barriers to learning or attendance at school. When pupils do not come to school, leaders act swiftly to contact families, ensuring that they know where pupils are, and emphasising high expectations that all pupils attend school regularly. Support staff, including the emotional literacy support assistant and home-school link worker, provide valuable additional help that promotes good attendance, particularly for the most vulnerable. While some pupils do not come to school as often as they should, decreasing numbers are persistently absent. Leaders remain focused on working to ensure that all pupils come to school regularly.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we considered how well leaders, including governors, ensure that additional funding helps disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to achieve as well as they can. We evaluated how effectively the teaching of phonics enables pupils, especially boys, to reach the required standard by the end of Year 1. We also reviewed how leaders ensure that pupils, especially those who might be considered vulnerable, achieve consistently well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Over the past year, leaders have reviewed carefully their approach to supporting vulnerable pupils and how additional funding is spent. They identified that pupils were not routinely transferring what they learned during extra help sessions back into their long-term learning in class. Subsequent changes to how additional help is organised have led to more cohesive working, with out-of-lesson support complementing in-class work effectively. As a result, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making increasingly strong progress over time.
- Your deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator work effectively together to ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is used appropriately. Leaders keep governors well-informed about the difference their work is making to pupils' achievements, and publish useful information on the school website. They work openly with parents, promoting opportunities for parents to work alongside them in supporting their children's learning. Collectively, you and your leadership team recognise that raising attainment further for your large number of disadvantaged pupils remains a priority, so that all pupils are equally well equipped for the rigours of key stage 2 learning.
- In 2016, pupils' outcomes in phonics were not as strong as they had been previously. Leaders took prompt action to address this shortcoming, identifying the need for pupils to have greater opportunities to practise and apply their prior learning. During the inspection, Year 1 pupils were consistently using their phonics knowledge to help them to construct and write sentences correctly. Pupils were able to describe how their phonics learning helps them with their reading and writing.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the phonics screening check standard returned to the high levels seen in previous years. Leaders recognise that girls' particularly high levels of achievement mean that the attainment gap between them and boys has not currently reduced, but focused and regular additional support is provided quickly for any pupil who is not achieving the expected standard. Almost all pupils achieve the phonics screening check standard by the end of Year 2, as a result of effective teaching and support.
- Improving outcomes in writing has been an ongoing focus since the last inspection. Pupils now typically achieve standards in writing that are at least in line with national averages by the end of key stage 1. However, leaders believe outcomes in writing could be even better, so that they match pupils' strong achievements in reading and mathematics.

- Leaders and teachers demonstrate a clear understanding of how to promote writing through reading, and are supported in their work by useful training. Feedback to pupils about how to improve their work is precise and accessible. Consequently, pupils use what they learn from each piece of work to help make the next piece even better. This is evident in pupils' books, where consistent and helpful feedback and support from teachers, in line with the school's policy, are leading to accelerating progress in writing over time.
- Over the last year, leaders have taken a step back to review how effectively writing is taught. Staff work closely and collaboratively to share their expertise, with support staff working alongside teachers to plan learning and review pupils' progress. This has increased staff accountability at all levels. There is now a more immersive approach to delivering writing across the curriculum, which brings together new approaches to teaching handwriting, phonics and spelling, and punctuation and grammar. At this relatively early stage, there is further work to do to ensure that this new approach leads to consistently rapid progress for all pupils, especially those who most need to catch up.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent changes to how writing, spelling and handwriting are taught lead to accelerated progress in writing, so that pupils reach similarly high standards as they do in reading and mathematics
- outcomes and attendance of vulnerable pupils, particularly the disadvantaged, continue to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Moles
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy headteacher to consider the school's self-evaluation, safeguarding arrangements and how well pupils are achieving. Together, we visited all classrooms to watch pupils learning, talk to them and look at their work. I met with your special educational needs coordinator, and with groups of staff and pupils. I spoke to two members of the governing body, including the vice-chair of the governing body, and to a representative of the local authority. Together with three of your teachers, I reviewed some examples of pupils' writing. I

spoke to parents informally at the start and end of the day, and considered six responses to the Parent View online questionnaire. I also took staff views into account, through 18 responses to the staff survey. I checked the school's records of staff recruitment checks, and a range of documents available on the school website and in school, including your pupil premium strategy, and your safeguarding and child protection policies.