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23 May 2018

Ms Jill Augustin
Headteacher
Handsworth Primary School
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Dear Ms Augustin

Short inspection of Handsworth Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 2018, 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and governors have a very clear understanding of the school's performance and use this to plan carefully for the next stage of its development. You work well together towards a shared vision for the school and continually strive to improve. The governing body is highly effective. Governors carefully balance the challenge that they present to leaders with support for the school's improvement. Parents and carers are very happy with the school and all that it provides for their children.

Leaders have maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection and tackled areas identified for improvement effectively. This includes making sure that teaching challenges the pupils and holds their attention and interest. You have also made other changes to improve learning. These include, for example, adapting the way in which disadvantaged pupils are supported.

Leaders continue to monitor carefully the quality of teaching and learning. This is used to focus further training sharply on where it is needed. Strong support is provided to help all staff develop, whatever their roles. As a result, pupils continue to make good progress, and their attainment is above average by the end of Year 6 in each of reading, writing and mathematics.

You and your team ensure that there is a very calm and orderly atmosphere in the school. You successfully help pupils to meet the school values, which are expressed through the '4Cs': 'Consideration, Cooperation, Courtesy and Care'. Pupils are very

positive about school. They were seen to be fully immersed in their learning and taking great care over their work. Pupils greatly enjoyed sharing ideas with a partner or a group. Their responses to teachers' questions were thoughtful. Pupils are gradually becoming more confident at trying out ideas and learning from their mistakes. Pupils told me that the exemplary behaviour during the inspection is typical of their daily experience.

You keep the curriculum constantly under review. Skills in each subject are carefully mapped across the school so that learning can deepen and skills develop in sequence. The school's emphasis on the development of reading across the curriculum enhances pupils' reading skills and their subject learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of a high quality. Regular training has developed a strong safeguarding culture among staff and pupils. There is much discussion about possible risks to pupils' safety; staff are very aware of the signs to look out for and what they should do if they have concerns about a pupil. They have a detailed understanding of the factors that make pupils vulnerable.

Pupils feel safe and are knowledgeable about issues surrounding e-safety, for example. Parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire overwhelmingly agree that the school keeps their children safe. Close links with home, outside agencies and the local secondary school help to identify concerns and focus support where needed. For example, the police talk annually to Year 6 pupils about the dangers of gangs and criminality. You tackled quickly an e-safety concern about 'gaming', by providing information to help parents understand the problem and support their children. The school checks carefully and accounts for all pupils who move to other schools.

Inspection findings

- We identified three lines of enquiry at the start of the inspection. The first we agreed to explore was the school's work to support pupils' strong progress and above-average attainment in reading. This had been highlighted as a particular area of strength at the previous inspection. Year 1 pupils' attainment in phonics has been consistently above average since then. Pupils' progress in reading at key stage 2 was among the highest in primary schools nationally in 2017 and Year 6 pupils' attainment was above average.
- The teaching of phonics continues to get children off to a good start and leads to the above-average attainment of pupils in Year 1. Pupils quickly learn the sounds made by individual letters and combinations of letters. They apply this understanding well to help them when meeting unfamiliar words.
- You have taken a wide range of actions to generate a love of reading among pupils. These include reading in welcoming classroom book corners, having regular opportunities to 'free read' their own choice of book and to work with a well-known author. Pupils use interesting texts to stimulate their writing. For

example, Year 4 pupils wrote poems based on 'The pebble in my pocket', and Year 6 pupils adapted 'The Lady of Shalott'. Teachers choose texts carefully to support pupils' learning in other subjects, such as geography and history.

- Even so, there is some inconsistency in pupils' progress in the development of wider reading skills such as comprehension, inference and deduction. Different teaching methods are used from one year group to another, and subject leaders have not yet established which of these constitute the best practice to be shared across the school.
- We next decided to explore why progress in mathematics has not been as strong as in reading. This was identified by the previous report as an area for development, even though progress in mathematics had been improving. Pupils of middle ability in the 2017 Year 6 cohort did not make the same strong progress as others and, overall, pupils' attainment was below that in reading, although still above that of pupils nationally.
- You and the subject team have introduced a systematic approach to the development of number skills across the school. Teachers provide many activities for pupils to practise their skills and deepen their understanding of new concepts. These include solving problems and puzzles, for example. You have identified that the next stage is to promote greater consistency across the school in the development of pupils' reasoning skills. Teachers have adopted a variety of methods to extend pupils' thinking. However, as in English, subject leaders are unclear which methods work best and have the maximum impact on pupils' progress.
- As a consequence of your work, progress is improving in some aspects of mathematics. Pupils have secure and accurate calculation skills. Their mental arithmetic is continually sharpened so their recall is swift. Pupils learn to use formal methods of calculating accurately, including with fractions. Pupils can also investigate lines of enquiry, such as when Year 2 pupils worked with great determination on a very challenging tessellations activity; they were quite happy to try out ideas and change tack if they did not work. The area in which pupils are less secure is in their ability to reason logically. This is in part because they are not consistently asked to explain their thinking.
- The final area we selected as a focus for the inspection was the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Although the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is too small for secure analysis, in 2017 their progress and attainment was well below that of their peers nationally. This was also the case with previous cohorts. Your improvement plan has identified this as a priority for action this year. The target is that attainment should be in line with that of other pupils nationally by the end of Year 6.
- You undertook research and used the experiences gained from supporting other schools to identify ways of allocating pupil premium funding more effectively. As a result, you have moved to more individualised and flexible programmes of support for disadvantaged pupils. Each pupil has a 'provision map' based on their individual needs and personal targets. Their progress is regularly and carefully reviewed between teacher and pupil. This has made teachers more accountable for the progress of disadvantaged pupils in their classes.

- The school has also taken a wider view of the development of each pupil. Play therapy and mentoring are used to improve attitudes to learning. The school uses money to fund places on school visits and residential trips, and to enter the more able disadvantaged pupils for mathematics competitions and a chess championship. You also identified improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils as a priority. Immediate phone calls home in the event of absence and further meetings with identified families have resulted in their much-improved attendance this year.
- The result of this action is that disadvantaged pupils have been making much-improved progress this year, particularly in Year 6. Most are now working at least at the standard expected for their age. Year 6 pupils told me how much of a difference the regular review of their targets with their teachers had made to their learning and confidence.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they train subject teams for English and mathematics so that their monitoring identifies more precisely what actions have the most impact on pupils' learning
- pupils develop secure reasoning skills in mathematics so they can explain the thinking behind their answers.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- I met you, your senior team and the English and mathematics leadership teams. I met five governors.
- You and your deputy headteacher accompanied me when I visited parts of lessons. I also observed pupils as they moved around the school.
- I met with a group of pupils to discuss their experiences of school.
- I took account of the 135 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also took account of the 26 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 90 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

- I evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep children safe and records of training and safeguarding checks.