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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mrs Heidi Hollis
Headteacher
Dunkirk Primary and Nursery School
Marlborough Street
Dunkirk
Nottingham
Nottinghamshire
NG7 2LE

Dear Mrs Hollis

Short inspection of Dunkirk Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 11 December 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 April 2015.

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 effectively led substantial changes in the school during the three years since your appointment as headteacher. The school has increased in size by at least one full class per year for the past six years. This growth has been accommodated in a previously closed school building, one mile from the original site. The two deputy headteachers are new to role and the school has very recently appointed a new chair and vice-chair of governors. The senior leadership team structure is effective and enables you to meet the challenges of leading and managing a split-site school. Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

The staff response to Ofsted's online questionnaire shows that leaders have some work to do on improving communication with a minority of staff. Only a small proportion of parents and carers responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Of these parents, a minority expressed concerns about bullying and communication with the school. I explored these concerns with you during the inspection.

I visited many of the classes on the Highfields Campus and the Abbey Campus with you. All the pupils we saw were behaving well and were fully focused on their work. The large majority of pupils I talked with enjoyed learning at this school and were

proud of, and keen for me to see, the work they had completed. The poetry that older pupils wrote to commemorate the centenary of the First World War was vivid and moving.

Many pupils start in Dunkirk Primary and Nursery School part-way through a year or a key stage. In addition, many pupils have English as an additional language and some new starters do not speak any English. Leaders have used resources well to ensure that children in the early years and pupils in key stages 1 and 2 can take part in the curriculum as quickly as possible. One example is where staff support individual pupils with little English language and encourage them to participate in all activities and so rapidly increase their knowledge of English.

Leaders have a good knowledge of the needs of all pupils at the school. As a result, pupils overcome the barriers they face and make good progress. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's priorities and how these are being met through the school's improvement plans. All new governors are provided with appropriate training, through the local authority, to help them hold leaders to account.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that teaching is outstanding in every class so that pupils' progress in English and mathematics is rapid and sustained. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics has been consistently in line with the national average. Unvalidated data indicates that this remains the case in reading and writing but suggests that in mathematics progress is above the national average. The school's own information indicates that the attainment and progress of pupils currently in the school are strong in key stage 1 and 2. The percentage of pupils in key stage 1 who are working at the standard expected of their age is higher this year than it was last year. Pupils' work in mathematics and writing confirmed that they were being challenged and improving over time.

I explored the progress and attainment of boys in writing through key stage 2 as this had been lower than that of girls in past data. You had identified that boys had taken less interest in writing than girls had. You have changed the way the curriculum is taught. Each piece of writing is now based on an interesting activity or focus. Boys in key stage 2 told me that they enjoyed writing because it gave them a chance to express themselves. I saw examples of boys' and girls' extended writing that was of a high quality, across key stage 2. The school's own attainment and progress data matched my observations that boys' attainment and progress in writing are substantially improved.

Leaders were also asked to ensure that pupils practised their number skills and solved problems. You and the leadership team have made changes in the school's policy for teaching mathematics and have increased the focus on practising number skills and solving problems. Together, we examined pupils' work across key stages 1 and 2. I saw substantial evidence of pupils consolidating their understanding of numbers and calculations and of solving problems.

In addition, leaders were asked to ensure that high expectations, including of pupils'

presentation of work, were adopted consistently in every year group. I looked at children's work in the early years and pupils' work across key stages 1 and 2. The presentation was consistently high. Many pupils develop very good handwriting skills early in key stage 1, meeting and surpassing expectations for their age. The large majority of the work I saw was presented well and was appropriately challenging. In the early years, children are working across a wide range of stages. Resources to support learning are appropriately focused and children are given the right level of challenge for their stage of learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding systems are thorough and fit for purpose. Concerns were raised during the course of the inspection regarding checks made on volunteers. Leaders had also identified weaknesses in this aspect of the checks in the past and have changed the procedures and recording system. The systems and process for the checks are now thorough. At least five governors and several senior leaders have been trained to ensure safer recruitment. The new chair and vice-chair of the governing body have extensive experience in safeguarding from their professional work and use these skills to support and challenge the school. For example, governors check the single central record on a regular basis to ensure that it complies with statutory requirements.

All pupils I spoke with during the course of the inspection said that they feel safe in school. Most parents who responded to Parent View feel that the school keeps their children safe. Some parents expressed concerns about bullying, including through Parent View. I asked leaders and pupils about this and explored the school's records. Pupils who spoke with me did not report bullying as a concern and were confident that teachers dealt with it effectively. Leaders have maintained detailed records when there have been allegations of bullying. Leaders' systems and processes for dealing with bullying are appropriate. They have not clearly and effectively communicated these approaches to all parents. A small number of parents are unhappy with leaders' actions and leaders' responses to their concerns.

Attendance leaders monitor absence closely and take effective action to reduce it. For example, they meet informally with parents and ensure that they are able to provide support when necessary. However, there are genuine reasons why some pupils have been unable to attend school for extended periods. When unavoidable absence is taken into account, the remaining persistent absence is a little lower than the national percentage.

I explored leaders' understanding and knowledge of pupils' medical needs and how they met them. Leaders have detailed records of all pupils' medical needs and disabilities. They have detailed and appropriate plans to keep pupils safe.

The safeguarding leaders ensure that staff keep accurate and timely records of concerns about pupils and leaders regularly review them. Leaders meet their safeguarding reporting duties thoroughly and communicate effectively with the other agencies, including the appropriate social care teams.

Inspection findings

- Unvalidated information from 2018 indicates that, overall, pupils made progress above the national average in mathematics at the end of key stage 2. However, disadvantaged pupils made progress that was in line with the national average. As a result, this data indicates that disadvantaged pupils did not close the gap with other pupils nationally. Leaders identified the progress of these pupils as a key priority.
- You and the leadership team have led a substantial change in the approach to teaching mathematics. Leaders have also identified poor reading skills as a barrier to understanding written problems in mathematics. Staff training over the last two years has had a substantial focus on improving mathematics teaching. The impact is not yet consistent, because not all teachers are making consistently effective use of the resources available to them.
- Your internal data shows that some groups of disadvantaged pupils are making rapid progress. I was able to confirm this when I reviewed their mathematics work with you.
- Leaders identified a weakness in the teaching of phonics. The proportion of pupils who attained the skills necessary for the Year 1 phonics screening check fell from 2015 to 2017. You have increased the consistency of approach through staff training. In the unvalidated 2018 results, the percentage of pupils who met the expected phonics standard increased compared to 2017. Your current attainment information indicates that the percentage will rise further in 2019.
- I listened to pupils from Years 1 and 2 read. They included the more able pupils as well as those with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. They all used phonics strategies effectively to read difficult and unfamiliar words. Most of the pupils read with appropriate intonation, pausing appropriately and indicating where there were questions with a change in tone. Nearly all pupils could answer questions about the characters and events they had read about.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally in mathematics closes rapidly and consistently
- they secure a clear and consistent understanding of the school's communication channels with the staff team and parents, and the approach to dealing with allegations of bullying for parents.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Worrall
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the two deputy headteachers. I also met with the chair and vice-chair of governors and with the school business manager. I held a telephone conversation with the school improvement adviser from the Nottingham Schools Trust who works with you, and with the special educational needs coordinator. I scrutinised a range of documents, including those relating to pupils' progress, the school's improvement planning, self-evaluation and documents relating to attendance and safeguarding. I visited all key stages with you to see the learning that was taking place and observed groups of key stage 2 pupils learning mathematics and writing. I spoke with pupils informally in classes and at lunchtime. I looked at work in pupils' books. I listened to a group of pupils from Years 1 and 2 read. I took account of the views of 34 parents through responses to Parent View and parents who spoke with me at the school. I also took account of the 24 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.