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3 July 2019

Mrs Anna Morris
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Morris

Short inspection of Nova Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 June 2019, 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 December 2015.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Since you and your deputy headteacher started in post in January 2018, you have worked conscientiously and successfully improved standards. During this time, it has been necessary for you to take decisive, but appropriate, action to resolve complex staffing issues and recruit new governors. This has taken up a large amount of your time and hindered you from addressing several aspects of school improvement with the rigour that is needed. Several staff and governors are new to their roles and it will take time before their impact on pupil outcomes can be evaluated.

Adults form positive and caring relationships with pupils. Most pupils listen respectfully to adults, which helps them with their learning. Recent improvements to teaching have led to a considerable increase in the proportion of pupils achieving well in all subjects and key stages. However, these improvements have not been embedded across all year groups. Consequently, several pupils, particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not achieve as well they should.

Leaders do not use the school's assessment systems with the precision needed to evaluate pupils' progress. As a result, leaders and teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Therefore, work that teachers set for pupils does not consistently challenge them.

Leaders liaise appropriately with external agencies and parents and carers to support pupils and their families. For example, leaders provide targeted behavioural support and extra teaching. This is improving some pupils' behaviour and enabling them to concentrate on their work. However, it has not yet had a sustained impact on improving pupils' attendance and achievement.

The vast majority of pupils enjoy the school and typically comment that adults look after them well. Most parents and staff share this view. Typical comments from parents were: 'Teachers are supportive and helpful' and 'My child has thrived here.'

Pupils believe that, when behaviour falls short of adults' expectations, issues are resolved quickly. However, a few members of staff and a minority of parents believe that the school's behaviour policy is not consistently applied. The school's behaviour records confirm that incidents of poor behaviour are common.

Safeguarding is effective.

You provide regular updates and training for staff. As a result, they understand that everyone has a responsibility for keeping pupils safe. Staff know that it is essential to be vigilant and can recognise the signs that might indicate a pupil is at risk. Staff consistently explain how to refer concerns. You do not hesitate to seek advice from external agencies when necessary. You and other leaders maintain detailed and well-organised safeguarding records. Leaders routinely check their actions to ensure they are having a positive impact.

You undertake all necessary checks to assure yourself that all adults working in the school are safe to work with children. You meticulously record these details on the school's single central record.

Inspection findings

- We agreed that my first line of enquiry would check if recent improvements to outcomes in the early years have been sustained. Inspection activities confirm that good teaching has a positive impact on children's outcomes. Most children enter the early years at a level slightly below what is considered typical for their age. Effective teaching ensures that children make strong progress. As a result, the proportion of children achieving well is broadly in line with that of children nationally.
- The early years is a welcoming and interesting environment which encourages children to explore and find things out. For example, children use magnifying glasses to observe tadpoles and then write what they see. Children become absorbed in finding out what happens when they mix different colours of paint. Adults form positive relationships with children and explain tasks clearly. This ensures that children understand what to do. For example, children talk about the sequence of events in 'The Snail and the Whale', which helps them to write their own stories.

- My second line of enquiry was to find out whether recent improvements to outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have been sustained. This is because, in recent years, effective teaching at key stage 2 led to a high proportion of pupils achieving well in all subjects. In 2018, improvements to teaching in key stage 1 led to a notable increase in the proportion of pupils achieving well in all subjects.
- Pupils enjoy studying interesting topics, which motivate them to learn and help them to develop their writing. For example, Year 6 pupils visited Bristol harbour to find out and write about the arrival of migrants in the 1940s. Pupils in Year 5 learn how to write persuasive letters to encourage people to care for the environment. In reading, teachers support pupils to develop their vocabulary and improve their inference and comprehension skills. In mathematics, pupils regularly practise their calculation skills. This is improving their fluency in mathematics and helping them to reason and solve problems.
- However, the school's assessment systems do not enable leaders and teachers to evaluate pupils' progress precisely. As a result, expectations of what pupils can achieve are often too low. The school's latest assessment information and reviews of pupils' learning confirm that several pupils are making insufficient progress.
- Next, I wanted to check the impact of support for pupils with SEND. This is because, over time, many pupils have not achieved well. Inspection activities confirm that this is still the case, and two thirds of current pupils are unable to undertake work typical for their age. You have resolved some difficult staffing issues this year. This has meant that, until very recently, you have not had a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). Pupils have not had precisely targeted support. Therefore, the impact of teaching on pupils' outcomes has been limited. Your new SENCo has only been in post for three weeks. However, she has swiftly evaluated how to improve provision for pupils with SEND. She works closely with parents, pupils and staff to gain an understanding of pupils' needs. She is using this information to implement focused pastoral and academic support. However, it is too soon to assess the impact of these improvements.
- Finally, I wanted to determine how effectively leaders and governors fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities, particularly in relation to improving attendance. Over time, pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, have higher absence rates than pupils nationally. Leaders work closely with families to emphasise the importance of regular attendance. However, to date, this has had little impact. This means that many pupils are unable to benefit fully from their education.
- The school provides additional pastoral support for pupils who need help to manage their behaviour. This enables some pupils to deal with their emotions more appropriately. However, the school's behaviour management strategies have not been successful for all pupils. Consequently, several pupils are unable to control their anger, and there have been frequent incidents of unruly behaviour.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they refine the school's assessment systems so that leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the progress that pupils make
- teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and set work that ensures that all pupils, especially pupils with SEND, are challenged to make the best possible progress
- precisely targeted plans for the most vulnerable pupils have an explicit impact on improving pupils' attendance and behaviour
- all staff consistently apply the behaviour policy, so that pupils understand what is expected of them and routinely demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Beeks
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held several meetings with you and your deputy headteacher. I also met with the early years leader, the special educational needs coordinator and subject leaders for reading, writing and mathematics. I held a meeting with a group of governors and a separate meeting with a representative from the local authority. I checked the school's single central record and some of your safeguarding documentation. We also discussed your safeguarding procedures. We reviewed the school's latest assessment information and discussed the school's self-evaluation and development priorities. You and your deputy headteacher joined me in observations of pupils' learning in books and lessons in the early years and Years 1, 3, 5 and 6. I spoke with several pupils in lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime, to gain their views of the school. I held informal discussions with several parents at the beginning of the school day and considered 23 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View, along with 13 additional free-text comments. I also took account of 190 responses to the school's latest questionnaire for parents. I reviewed 35 responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.