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Ms S Spivey
Headteacher
Springfield School
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Dear Ms Spivey

Short inspection of Springfield School

Following my visit to your school on 3 February 2016, 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 March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The school is improving because of the very good leadership you and your senior team provide. You and other senior leaders are very outward looking. You usefully obtain external validation of the quality of your work from the local authority and from other sources.

Pupils' behaviour remains very good. They are welcoming to visitors, show a mature respect for each other and enjoy working with their teachers. New systems to gauge the achievements of pupils give you and other leaders a firm grip on the quality of their learning and the impact of teaching.

The quality of teaching is very well led and managed. Staff morale is high and there is sense of pride in the quality of learning in the school from them and from pupils. Standards remain at least above average or are improving in all key subjects. Pupils' achievements in some subjects are not yet securely good but you are aware of this and are taking effective action.

Pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils) have not achieved as well as they should in the past. You and governors rightly see this as an urgent priority and there remains more to be done

to close these gaps. The steps being taken currently to improve the progress they make are being successful. Girls have achieved better than boys in the past and you are currently prioritising the more rapid progress of boys, particularly those who are more able.

Attendance remains above the national average. However, you are aware that the attendance of some groups, including those who are eligible for the pupil premium and some pupils with special educational needs or disability, needs to be better.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of care for pupils and for their safeguarding in the school. All aspects of safeguarding meet requirements.

Checks undertaken on newly appointed staff and other adults who work with or come into contact with children are carried out diligently. A designated safeguarding governor oversees these processes annually, as well as other aspects of safeguarding. All staff receive up-to-date training in procedures around the safeguarding and welfare of pupils at key points in the year. This information is covered in the induction programme for all new staff. The school's safeguarding policy is clear and informative and it is published on the school website.

Staff and governors have undertaken appropriate training on the school's responsibilities for preventing extremism and the radicalisation of young people. This allows them to identify and respond to any concerns they have. Some pupils' awareness of this issue is still underdeveloped, however.

Inspection findings

- You give the school strong, purposeful leadership. You are sharply focused on ensuring the continued improvement of standards of achievement and the welfare of pupils. You are very ably supported by your senior team, whose members have clear lines of responsibility and who work well together across their specific areas of interest.
- Many middle leaders are quite new to the school but are contributing well. They are held closely to account. There is greater clarity in the roles of heads of achievement and pastoral managers. This means that support staff are addressing pupil welfare issues effectively. Teaching staff monitor the progress of pupils carefully, and intervene in a timely way if any fall behind. Heads of key subjects focus well on addressing any shortfalls in the progress of specific groups of pupils.

- The new assessment system emphasises appropriately the progress that pupils are making. Pupils' achievements are checked carefully throughout the year. This gives the school high-quality information on which to base interventions to support learning and the quality of teaching. Sometimes governors do not highlight important information about differences between the standards being achieved by different groups of pupils.
- The school places a high premium on teachers knowing pupils well and responding to their individual needs rapidly. This is evident in the quality of feedback provided to pupils. Pupils spoken with during the visit wanted their appreciation of the support they are given by their teachers to be known and understood by inspectors.
- There is a wide range of successful strategies to improve the quality of teaching. Leaders' monitoring of lessons generate precise information about strengths and development needs in teaching. This information is used to steer individual support, coaching, wider training and the work of teachers who work in school improvement groups. There are many opportunities to share good practice, including through weekly briefings.
- The school benefits from a wide range of involvement with external partners to validate its self-evaluation. The local authority has provided good support for the school on the basis of a thorough and detailed knowledge of its work. Regular reviews of the impact of specific initiatives and good-quality support for pupils with, for example, particular learning or emotional needs, are valued by the school. Specific support provided in art and design and in design and technology has been of real benefit to these subject areas.
- Governors exercise good strategic oversight of the work of the school. They have a good general awareness of all key issues. However, they do not always drill down to a level of detail that would allow them to offer focused challenge on some key aspects of your work. For example, they have not fully understood current trends in the gaps between the achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and the attendance of some groups.
- Equality of opportunity and the celebration of diversity have a high priority in the school. The school is a Stonewall Champion School and there are strong and clear messages around the site reinforcing ways in which pupils and staff can show respect for each other. All pupils are encouraged to take part in a wide range of activities as an expression of its inclusive approach. According to pupils, 'Everyone is encouraged to do something and take part in opportunities... whether you are good at them or not!'
- Pupils continue to behave very well in lessons and around the site. They value their learning and play a full part in lessons. When challenged, many can demonstrate sophisticated learning skills and offer very insightful comments in group and whole-class discussions. For example, in an English lesson on *Jane Eyre*, the stimulus of a picture of a marble column provoked a rich and fascinating discussion on the character of Mr Brocklehurst. This involved the fluent use of some impressive vocabulary.

- Attendance remains above the national average. However, some groups have not attended well in recent years, including those eligible for the pupil premium and pupils with special educational needs or disability. The overall attendance of these groups is skewed by the very low attendance of a very few pupils with complex needs. Underlying trends are positive. An isolation room for supervised study is used in response to the occasional instances of poor behaviour. This is reducing the frequency of exclusions, particularly for key vulnerable groups.
- Pupils continue to make at least good progress across a wide range of subjects, due to teachers' high expectations. Many teachers use good questioning to probe understanding and steer teaching. Pupils value the quality of working relationships between them and their teachers. One said, 'I enjoy coming to school and know it's my chance to succeed'.
- Pupils achieve very well in mathematics and science, notably in the separate sciences. Pupils work thoughtfully, and learning is rapid in these subjects. Progress in English is now improving and is better than published performance data for 2015, and before, would suggest. This progress is due to the very good leadership of the department. Leaders communicate high expectations of all pupils and require teachers to promote a thorough grasp of key concepts. Nearly all pupils study a modern foreign language to the end of Key Stage 4, and the majority to GCSE. They achieve well, especially in French. Achievement is particularly strong in some other subjects, including in geography and media studies. Achievement in physical education and core and additional science is improving.
- Gaps between standards reached by pupils eligible for the pupil premium and others have been large in recent years. These gaps are beginning to reduce because of the school's concentration on better provision for these pupils. More remains to be done to ensure that these pupils make very good progress over their time here and close the gaps by the end of Key Stage 4.
- Girls have made better progress than boys previously. The school is aware that the most-able boys in particular could be offered consistently higher levels of challenge in some lessons.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- gaps between the standards achieved by pupils eligible for the pupil premium and others are closed rapidly
- pupils eligible for the pupil premium attend as reliably as others
- improvements continue in the small number of subjects in which pupils' learning, especially boys', is not yet rapid.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Portsmouth City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met you, other senior staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, staff and pupils and with a representative of the local authority. Brief visits were made to 17 lessons to observe teaching and learning, some with school leaders. Documentary evidence, including policies and analyses of pupils' achievements were scrutinised. The school did not issue invitations for pupils or staff to take part in the online surveys, but the meetings with staff and pupils provided good information to inspectors about their views. The 28 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were scrutinised, as well as further information from the school about parents' views of its work.