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2 October 2016

Miss S Corkindale
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Corkindale

Short inspection of Sunshine Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 14 September 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 July 2012.

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 fostered a strong sense of ambition and pride among staff at Sunshine Infant and Nursery School. The leadership team are enthusiastic and energetic. They mentor and coach staff and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. You and your leaders responded quickly to the areas for development identified at the last inspection and have an accurate awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You have also acted on any emerging areas for development. As a result of careful planning and effective staff training, attainment is rising across the school. For instance, the dip in the 2015 phonics screening check has been quickly reversed. A high proportion of pupils reached the expected standard in 2016. You and your team are committed to ensuring that the teaching of phonics remains a high priority and that pupils' phonics skills are developed thoroughly and used well.

You are well aware of the key areas for future school improvement. Your improvement plan for 2016–2019 rightly identifies priorities in the following areas: spelling, grammar and punctuation (particularly in key stage 1), the development of approaches to the teaching of mathematics, and embedding standards in phonics. You have also recognised that work must continue to further improve rates of attendance and persistent absence.

The school environment is bright and attractive. All staff take a great deal of pride in the school and every space is put to good use. Corridors and displays celebrate a wealth of learning opportunities. Pupils are developing an early understanding of democracy through the election of school councillors and those elected wear their badges with pride. Parents who I spoke with unanimously believe that the school is effective. They value how well staff know the children and say that communication is excellent. One parent commented, 'My daughter enjoys her time at school and has even refused to come home as she was having too much fun!'

The last inspection identified the need to improve rates of progress in mathematics and to develop the use of personal learning targets for pupils. You have successfully addressed these areas for improvement through the planning and delivery of appropriate training for staff. Attainment in mathematics continues to rise at the end of key stage 1, which means that pupils are making good progress given their lower starting points. Staff closely follow the school's policies relating to assessment and feedback. They set pupils personal targets which are referred to by pupils and staff. Moreover, a rigorous approach to feedback, in line with leaders' expectations, ensures that pupils know exactly how well they are doing from lesson to lesson and what they must do next to improve further.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff know pupils very well. They attend weekly updates and briefings to share any potential concerns and are committed to ensuring high levels of pupils' welfare. You and your leadership team hold weekly meetings where you review every child who is receiving additional support. Multi-agency safeguarding meetings are well attended and any actions carefully documented in child protection files. Risk assessments are thorough and staff take time to consider any potential hazards or dangers. This attention to detail was noticeable in the risk assessments that were written for your last school visit to Walsall Arboretum.

Your governors are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe. They have attended a range of training and talk with a great deal of knowledge and understanding about the dangers of radicalisation and the associated risk factors. Clear procedures are in place to report any concerns.

Behaviour logs and incident records show that there have been improvements over time in pupils' behaviour. In 2015–2016 incidents of poor behaviour more than halved from the previous year. Similarly, exclusions also reduced significantly. The school is calm and orderly. Pupils were keen to talk to me and to ask questions about my visit.

While attendance has improved, you continue to work with families to tackle any persistent absence. In 2013 and 2015, rates of attendance were below national levels.

Inspection findings

- Governors and leaders know the school very well. Staff training is carefully linked to identified weaknesses in pupil achievement. For example, following the phonics results in 2015, leaders immediately set out plans to improve outcomes and halt any further decline. They were successful. Attainment has improved since the last inspection and plans are in place to ensure that teaching continues to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. You and governors acknowledge the importance of sustaining these improvements.
- The curriculum is broad and engaging. Work in pupils' books demonstrates the wide range of learning experiences. Last year, pupils in key stage 1 learned about politics, the royal family, Brazil and the skills of digital photography. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective and imaginative. Books are very well presented and important festivals and traditions are explored throughout the year.
- The monitoring of teaching is detailed and rigorous. Leaders scrutinise and evaluate teaching and learning on a weekly cycle. Staff welcome feedback and are given clear next steps to help develop their practice.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school. Though responses to Parent View were too low to generate results, the school sends out questionnaires termly to seek feedback from families. Results from surveys show a high level of satisfaction. I spoke with many parents at the start of the school day who were equally supportive of what you and your staff do. Parents also responded via text to an online Ofsted survey. Typical comments via this platform included: 'I am so glad to have chosen Sunshine for my child. She has settled in well to school life. The staff are approachable and I feel that nothing is too much trouble.'
- During the inspection children in the Reception Year were observed practising their phonics-related skills in your newly refurbished outdoor area. Staff are highly skilled and challenge children to sound out and write a range of tricky words. A multi-sensory approach to the teaching of phonics is ensuring that children develop important skills.
- The vast majority of children join school with skills well below those expected for their age. As a result of highly effective teaching in the early years, children make strong progress from their different starting points. Leaders have focused on narrowing any differences in attainment, and this has proved very successful. In 2016, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development rose again in Reception and there was very little difference in achievement between groups of children, including those who are disadvantaged.
- Leaders are aware of the barriers that disadvantaged pupils face. Any differences in the achievement of groups are diminishing over time, though there remained some variability in progress rates in Year 2 last year.
- In 2016 pupils took new tests at the end of Year 2 to assess their skills, knowledge and understanding of the new national curriculum. Rates of expected progress in Year 1 were stronger than in Year 2. In Year 2, fewer disadvantaged pupils made accelerated rates of progress in reading and mathematics compared to their peers. As a result of your analysis of assessment information, you and your leaders are refining assessment systems further so that you are able to track the progress that pupils make in even greater detail.

- Over time, the most able pupils are achieving at a higher level by the end of key stage 1. In 2015, a higher proportion of pupils attained the above-average Level 3 in writing compared to national figures. The proportion of pupils attaining at a higher level has also risen year on year in mathematics.
- Children are encouraged to attend your popular breakfast club and are keen to choose something to eat and socialise with their friends. Initiatives like this, which are supported by pupil premium funding, are helping the school to improve rates of attendance. Families are urged to make use of this free facility. In 2013 and 2015, levels of attendance had fallen below national levels. In 2015 rates of persistent absence were also a concern for some groups of children. As a result of the breakfast club's popularity and a range of other work, attendance levels are now in line with national figures. However, further work is required to reduce rates of persistent absence for some key groups.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Children are courteous and polite and respond positively to adults. They are inquisitive, keen to find out about visitors and very happy to learn.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the rigorous and systematic approach to the teaching and learning of phonics continues so that pupils' skills are fully embedded
- assessment procedures continue to be refined so that rates of progress, including any differences between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally, are closely tracked and swift action taken when any underachievement is identified
- overall attendance, and in particular the persistent absence of any individual or group, continues to be monitored.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with parents before school at both gates. During the inspection I met with you and your leadership team. I scrutinised the school's single central record, a sample of personnel files and a wide range of child protection files and policies. I met with you and your leaders to review the effectiveness of your improvement plans and discuss the contents of your self-evaluation. We set out key lines of enquiry and jointly visited lessons to observe the impact of teaching, learning and assessment. We heard a group of pupils from Year 2 reading and I used phonics screening test resources to explore the extent to which they are able to apply their skills. I met with the school's adviser from the local authority to discuss school improvement. I had a meeting with three of your governors, including the chair of the governing body.

I met with you and your leaders to discuss achievement across the school. We explored assessment procedures and scrutinised the quality of learning in a range of topic and mathematics books. I met with your middle leaders to discuss their improvement work, the training they receive and their knowledge of safeguarding procedures. I spoke with children from the Reception Year during the lunch hour and Year 2 while reading with them. You provided me with a range of documentation which was reviewed and analysed; this included governing body minutes, behaviour incident logs, attendance records, monitoring records and reviews provided by the local authority. Responses from 26 staff and five parents via Ofsted's online questionnaires were also reviewed and shared with you and your leaders.