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7 March 2017

Mrs Sian Randall
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Randall

Short inspection of Sea Mills Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 2017, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

Although the school has experienced recurrent changes in leadership in recent years, the good quality of education has been maintained since the last inspection. Governors have now successfully secured the leadership with your recent appointment to the position of headteacher.

Since your arrival in January, you have wasted no time in securing the respect and support of the staff. Together, you share a determination and drive for the school to build upon its many strengths. Governors commented how they are very proud of your appointment, describing you as someone who has an 'absolute can do attitude, who is extremely motivated and doing what she says she is going to do'. Consequently, the staff and governors are confident that under your leadership the school will continue to flourish.

Leaders know the school and its pupils extremely well. You have a clear and accurate knowledge of the areas that require improvement. For example, you are fully aware that disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, need to make stronger progress to ensure that any remaining differences are quickly diminished. This is especially so in key stage 1 where these pupils are not making as much progress as they are capable of. You have detailed and robust plans in place to quickly tackle these areas. Current progress information shows a rapidly improving picture. Governors are also fully aware of what needs to improve. They are becoming skilled at asking those searching questions to check that the actions you are taking are having the necessary impact on pupil progress.

Pupils typically make good progress especially in reading, writing and mathematics. This is reflected in the 2016 published information. Pupils achieved above national expectations at key stage 1 and key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Outcomes in the early years provision continue to improve year on year and are well above national expectations. Similarly, pupils achieve well above the national expectation in the phonics screening check. These outcomes are as a result of good teaching and pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their desire to do well. Current progress information shows this upward trajectory is set to continue.

Most parents who submitted comments either through conversation or via the online inspection questionnaire are positive about the quality of education and care their children receive at Sea Mills. However, some parents did express concern specifically about how the school responds to their concerns and the progress their children are making. Nevertheless, many parents are delighted with the school and have great confidence in the new leadership in moving the school forward.

At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed on the key lines of enquiry to be considered during the day. These included how the school ensures that pupils are safe, including attendance, how effective leaders are in securing good progress for pupils, especially those disadvantaged and the most able disadvantaged pupils, specifically at key stage 1, and how effectively the school responds to concerns when they are raised by parents. These key lines of enquiry are considered below under 'Safeguarding' and 'Inspection findings'.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders, including governors, consider the safeguarding of pupils to be of the utmost importance. They ensure that all safeguarding arrangements adhere to statutory requirements and are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies and decisive action is taken, when required, to keep pupils safe.

Staff and governors receive high-quality training. All staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding, including child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, radicalisation and extremism. This high-quality and comprehensive training enables staff to quickly spot concerns and take swift action with confidence.

Leaders, including governors, fully understand the importance of recruiting safely. Checks are rigorously undertaken on all staff prior to starting employment. Risk assessments are thorough and carefully monitored by leaders to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. For example, fire evacuation procedures for pupils in wheelchairs are thorough.

Pupils explain with confidence how they can approach any member of staff to share whatever worries or concerns they may have. They feel safe and crucially have a secure understanding of the importance of keeping safe. For example, they understand how to use the internet safely and the importance of not sharing any personal information with people they do not know. However, the school is not

complacent and is acutely aware of the need to remain alert to ensure that pupils, especially those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, are kept safe.

Inspection findings

- You have quickly established yourself as headteacher of Sea Mills Primary School, and gained the confidence of the school community as an effective leader. Indeed, one parent described you as, 'amazing, fabulous, she gets her sleeves rolled up and gets stuck in'. Consequently, staff and governors share in your vision to improve the school to outstanding.
- The previous inspection report highlighted the need to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement, especially for the most able pupils. This has been tackled with vigour. Teachers ensure that pupils are provided with learning opportunities which challenge them and make them think deeply. This is clearly evidenced in the 2016 published information for key stage 2 pupils. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics was well above the national average and current school projections show pupils are on track to continue this strong achievement.
- Leaders carefully track the learning and progress of pupils through a range of monitoring activities which include observing learning, talking to pupils about their learning and viewing work. This enables leaders to provide teachers with high-quality guidance and support. As a result, teachers are highly skilled and the quality of teaching is good with some outstanding practice.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge and careful checking of what pupils can and cannot do enables them to plan activities which more precisely meet their needs. Consequently, pupils typically make strong progress. This is reflected in the published information which shows how pupils' progress is improving year on year for most groups. However, you are conscious you need to further diminish the differences in the progress made between disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, and other pupils, especially in key stage 1. Inspection evidence found that leaders are taking rapid action and current progress information shows strong improvement.
- Subject leaders have a good grasp of the subjects they lead. However, they need to be provided with increased monitoring opportunities to further develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their subjects to ensure continuous improvement.
- You are working tirelessly to further improve the attendance of pupils and eradicate persistent absence. Robust measures are in place and where you identify that attendance is not regular, decisive action is taken. You have no hesitation in taking any steps necessary to improve attendance, especially the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, the attendance of these groups is rising and persistent absence quickly reducing. Nevertheless, you are far from satisfied and continue to work closely with families, the family support worker and other agencies to ensure that pupils regularly attend school.
- Most parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. However, some

parents who completed the online questionnaire highlighted some disquiet, especially in the response of the school in dealing with their concerns. Policy and procedures for dealing with parental complaints are robust and carefully monitored by leaders, including governors. Evidence viewed during the inspection shows how procedures are fully adhered to on the extremely rare occasions when they are required.

- Leaders provide a range of opportunities to enable parents to get involved with their child's education. For example, parents of pupils in key stage 1 spend time each morning in the classroom with their child completing activities such as sharing a book. Parents spoken to appreciate and enjoy this time with their children.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- any remaining differences between disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, and other pupils are quickly diminished, especially in key stage 1
- subject leaders have the opportunity to take greater responsibility for developing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Jen Southall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your acting deputy headteacher and your staff. We talked about the improvements which have been made since the last inspection. Together, we carried out a 'learning walk' visiting every class. I also held discussions with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and talked to pupils. I met with an officer from the local authority.

A wide range of documentation was looked at, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and information relating to pupils' current achievement and progress. I also checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements and attendance information.

I spoke to parents at the start of the day and also took into account the 58 responses to the online survey 'Parent View' and considered additional comments received via text message from parents.