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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Kate Keller
Headteacher
Penhale Infant School & Nursery
Lincoln Road
Fratton
Portsmouth
Hampshire
PO1 5BG

Dear Mrs Keller

Short inspection of Penhale Infant School & Nursery

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 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 July 2013.

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 retained and developed a skilled leadership team which is driving significant improvements in the school. Your work to promote and train middle leaders is particularly effective. These new leaders have taken a substantial role in supporting teachers to improve. Consequently, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently high.

Pupils and staff know each other exceptionally well. Every pupil is treated as an individual and the opportunities to learn, play and grow are extensive. Pupils adore their school values of 'respect, every day counts, aim high, love learning and keep it real' and make a great effort to apply these to their learning. For example, pupils explained how much they treasured the time to read with adults such as their parents, many of whom attend family reading groups twice a week.

The highly skilled governing body receives regular updates on the performance of pupils. The governors use this information to ask pertinent questions of school leaders and hold them to account for their actions. The governing body offers significant backing to leaders by, for example, brokering support from specialist schools for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and possess the skills and knowledge to challenge leaders to improve further. For instance, leaders and governors recognise that systems for monitoring the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities require further development.

Pupils show great respect for each other and take pride in their behaviour. Vibrant outdoor spaces offer opportunities to role play, keep fit and engage in sport. Instances of poor behaviour are rare and when these do occur, pupils report that teachers deal with these well. In class, pupils happily work together and listen attentively to their teachers. For instance, in Year 2, pupils worked in pairs to research and discuss facts about Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson, listening carefully to each other and asking sensible questions. You have offered effective support to families to encourage positive patterns of attendance. As a result, the attendance levels for most pupils are high. You rightly identified that last year the attendance of disadvantaged pupils was not as high as others nationally and have taken appropriate action to address this.

The curriculum is varied and interesting. The 'enhanced learning' lessons provide pupils with the opportunity to choose their activities and pursue their own interests. For example, pupils in Year 1 created videos showing the journey depicted in the book, 'The lighthouse keeper's lunch'. Pupils used their skills in graphic design, stop-motion animation and editing to produce short films. Other groups created artwork using crepe paper to depict the sea and the drama space to act out a scene from the book. Pupils relish the opportunity to choose their activities and are highly motivated by the curriculum.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to provide further opportunities for pupils to investigate and enquire in mathematics. Leaders have reviewed the curriculum and now deliver regular activities that require pupils to reason and solve mathematical problems. As a result, pupils' progress in mathematics has accelerated throughout the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of high quality. Statutory checks are completed on all staff, governors and volunteers before they start working in the school. Governors monitor the quality of record-keeping and the work of the leadership team to keep pupils safe. For example, governors recently scrutinised minutes and attended leadership meetings to satisfy themselves that leaders share important safeguarding information with each other effectively.

Staff are well trained to protect pupils and show high levels of vigilance. When concerns are shared with leaders, appropriate action is taken to safeguard pupils. Excellent record-keeping and effective liaison with external agencies help to keep pupils safe.

Pupils learn about safety both in school and in the wider world. For example, pupils in Year 2 explained how to cross a road safely and to identify appropriate crossing points such as pelican and zebra crossings. Children in Reception learn how to take managed risks in situations such as climbing stairs and riding tricycles. Pupils have a clear understanding of risk and know how to ask for help if a situation worries them.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed to look at the effectiveness of safeguarding; the quality of support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; the progress of disadvantaged pupils, particularly boys, in reading and writing and how effectively leaders support and challenge teachers to improve.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are skilfully supported by the SENCo. Excellent transition arrangements with local nurseries and parents ensure that pupils who require support are identified and assessed quickly when they start at school. Support for these pupils is bespoke and highly effective. The skilled team of support staff provides a range of additional teaching interventions to help pupils catch up. As a result, the majority of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points.
- In 2017, Year 2 disadvantaged boys attained below other pupils nationally. Leaders have taken effective action to support this group of pupils. The deputy headteacher meets with disadvantaged boys and consults parents to research and develop activities that will interest them. For example, boys in Year 1 chose to make sandwiches and wrote instructions to others, explaining how to make them. Many disadvantaged boys receive additional oracy lessons that support them to form grammatically correct sentences. Standards in reading and writing achieved by disadvantaged boys have improved. Nevertheless, a smaller proportion of disadvantaged pupils attain a high standard of reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 than others do nationally.
- Senior leaders have created a culture whereby staff are challenged and supported. All staff receive useful feedback to help them improve. Middle and senior leaders revisit classes to ensure that improvements are made and provide further support when required. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved apace.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the progress of disadvantaged pupils accelerates so that a greater proportion attain a high standard of reading and writing
- systems for monitoring the progress of pupils who have educational needs and/or disabilities offer clear and accurate information.

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. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Lambert
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, school leaders and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I observed learning in eight classes. I analysed a range of school documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I considered the 16 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and spoke to parents at the beginning of the day. Some parents offered written responses, which I also considered. I analysed the results of the confidential staff and pupil surveys. I met with pupils from Years 1 and 2. I gathered the views of other pupils throughout the day.