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Miss Sarah Parry
Headteacher
Southmead Primary School
Princes Way
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SW19 6QT

Dear Miss Parry

Short inspection of Southmead Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You provide strong, confident leadership, ably supported by the other leaders in the school. You have identified the right priorities for the school and have acted on them rigorously.

Since your appointment as headteacher in June 2016, you have increased the number of senior leaders. The leadership team is committed to the school and it is having a clear impact on improving pupils' outcomes. Leaders understand the school performance information and use this to inform actions to bring about positive change.

There is a real commitment and team spirit within the teaching team and this is also contributing to school improvement. Staff and pupils are very proud of the school and they are happy to work and learn there.

The areas for development identified at the previous inspection have largely been addressed. Pupils are given opportunities to practise work on their own regularly and this was evident in many of the sessions that were visited.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective and records are detailed and of a high quality. Staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding, including female genital mutilation awareness and the identification of signs that pupils may be at risk of radicalisation. Staff understand the procedures for raising concerns.

Leaders have a detailed knowledge of individual pupils who are at risk or vulnerable. They are tenacious in chasing responses from outside agencies if information exchange is too slow. Staff are ready to challenge any decisions made by external agencies if they believe that these decisions are not in the best interests of the children.

Pupils feel safe and are kept safe at school. Pupils trust the adults that work with them and feel safe in their care. Pupils can give examples, including in relation to online safety, about how to stay safe. Pupils talk confidently about how to assess risks and use the internet sensibly and safely. Leaders are effective in building strong relationships with parents. Responses from parents show that they are confident that their children are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to focus on how effective leaders have been in improving the provision in the early years foundation stage, particularly in reading and writing. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2016 was lower than the national average. The proportion of children achieving age-expected standards in reading and writing was also lower than the national average in 2016.
- Since September 2016, you have increased leadership capacity and leaders now provide more effective support for both teachers and children. Leaders set aspirational targets and use assessment information to ensure that support is delivered to children who need it most.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of what constitutes strong teaching and learning in the early years. You have introduced an effective range of strategies that are having a positive impact on children's outcomes. For example, children receive well-targeted support to ensure that they do not fall behind in their learning.
- As a result, children in the early years are now making stronger progress in reading and writing than they have done in the past. The children's work shows that they are set to achieve significantly better outcomes in 2017 than in previous years.
- However, you are aware that there is scope for further improvement in the early years, particularly in strengthening children's reading and writing outcomes. From the shared observations we made, leaders agreed that occasionally teachers do not systematically check children's understanding to enable more rapid progress.

- Another key line of enquiry we agreed upon was to look at how leaders are tackling the high levels of absence for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for disadvantaged pupils. Attendance for both these groups was well below the national average in 2016.
- You have prioritised this area and have introduced measures that have improved overall attendance and reduced the incidents of persistent absence. For example, you have ensured that good attendance is rewarded. You have created a sense of competition to motivate pupils to attend school regularly.
- As a result, attendance is improving over time, both overall and particularly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. Current school information shows that it is now in line with the national average.
- We also agreed to look at the impact that leaders are having on improving reading across the school, particularly for girls and the most able girls. The results in 2016 showed that girls' reading standards were below the national average in Year 2, even though phonics standards in Year 1 are consistently above national averages. In key stage 2, progress for the most able girls in Year 6 was very low in 2016. As a result, the proportion of girls achieving the high standard in the national test was below the national average.
- I found that the leadership of reading is strong. You have introduced effective support for reading by providing well-targeted assistance to pupils who need it. In most cases, pupils are working in line with age-related expectations, and where they are not, predominantly in the lower key stage 2 classes, there is support to allow pupils to catch up quickly. For instance, during guided reading sessions, adults work effectively with small groups of pupils to teach specific reading skills.
- Younger pupils are able to use phonics skills appropriately to help them read unknown words and to read with confidence. Older pupils read challenging texts with fluency, demonstrating a secure understanding of complex ideas and vocabulary. Pupils say that they read frequently at home and are encouraged to do so by their teachers. This is confirmed by the evidence I saw in pupils' reading records.
- Girls' progress in reading is improving, particularly for the most able girls. The school's records show that a greater proportion of girls, including the most able girls in Year 6, are on track to reach the high standards in the national assessments.
- Despite these improvements, leaders are aware that there are still a few year groups, particularly lower key stage 2, where progress in reading could be even better. Leaders have accurately identified the need to continue careful monitoring and support for these year groups to ensure that all groups of pupils, and in particular girls, achieve to the very best of their capabilities in reading.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in reading, all groups of pupils, and in particular girls, build quickly on their secure phonics skills so that they achieve the standard of which they are capable by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2
- reading and writing outcomes in the early years foundation stage improve so that children develop the skills expected for their age and are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Milan Stevanovic
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the inspector carried out a range of activities. I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, middle leaders and members of the governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority and had discussions with staff. I visited lessons with senior leaders, particularly reading lessons, and also visited the early years foundation stage classes, including the Nursery. I listened to a group of key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils reading. A meeting was held with a group of pupils to discuss their views on reading and the school's approach to keeping pupils safe. Information provided by the school, including safeguarding records, attendance information, the school's self-evaluation and information about pupils' progress, was also reviewed and evaluated. The 25 responses to Parent View, 29 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 39 responses to the staff survey were also taken into account.