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14 March 2018

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Dear Mrs Johnson

Short inspection of Freegrounds Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 8 March 2018, 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 October 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 inspirational and ambitious leadership, setting high expectations for your staff and pupils. As one parent commented, 'This is a lovely school, with a super headteacher who genuinely cares for all the children.' Staff feel valued and work together well to ensure that teaching is of a consistently good quality across the school. You have worked successfully to develop the skills of school leaders. They support and challenge their colleagues effectively, with a drive to raise outcomes for pupils further. As one governor said, 'Our headteacher demands high standards.'

Pupils enjoy coming to Freegrounds Junior School. They think that children and staff are kind. They enjoy many things that the school has to offer, including football tournaments, the school library and leadership opportunities such as learning councillors and eco-reps. Pupils behave well in lessons and display a strong work ethic. They collaborate well on tasks. For example, in a Year 6 science lesson on adaptation, pupils listened attentively to each other's ideas and thoughtfully responded to their classmates' suggestions. The engaging, broad and balanced curriculum is enriched by many trips, which the children said are 'always exciting'. The school's core values, 'aspirational, curious, confident, respectful and successful', are embedded into the learning culture of the school. They make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being.

Many parents commented on how happy their children are at the school. They appreciate the approachable staff and the caring nature of the school. As one

parent wrote, 'The school has an inclusive, loving atmosphere which my child has thrived in.'

The previous inspection report highlighted the school's many strengths, including strong leadership, good behaviour of pupils and an exciting curriculum. These continue to be strengths in the school. At the last inspection leaders were asked to ensure that the most able pupils were fully challenged in their learning. In Year 6, in 2017, more pupils attained the higher levels in reading and writing than seen nationally and attainment at the higher standard was in line with that found nationally in mathematics. The previous inspection report also asked leaders to accelerate progress in mathematics. In Year 6, in 2017, the progress that pupils made in mathematics was in line with the national average. However, leaders are aware that girls made less progress in mathematics than boys in this cohort. Leaders are working rapidly to ensure that girls' progress in mathematics is equally as strong as boys' through a wide range of effective teaching strategies.

Leaders' self-evaluation is accurate. You understand the many strengths of the school but also know that there are still some areas to work on. You recognise there is still work to do in ensuring that the attainment of disadvantaged pupils rises. Leaders also acknowledge that they do not track the progress that different groups are making across the school closely enough.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff are trained regularly and a strong culture of safeguarding and care permeates the school. Policies and procedures are fit for purpose and day-to-day routines are secure. Pre-employment checks to ensure the suitability of all adults who work or volunteer in the school are fully in place. Leaders have good relationships with other agencies. Staff and governors understand their roles and responsibilities for keeping pupils safe well.

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school and that staff look after them 'brilliantly'. The pupils I spoke to said that there is no bullying and that teachers would sort it out if there was. They told me how they are always encouraged to go to the adults in the school with anything that worries them. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. They particularly enjoy their e-safety lessons based on scenarios, working out what they would do in various unsafe situations.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed that the focus for my visit would be on: the effective challenge in lessons, especially for the most able pupils; the progress girls are making in mathematics; and the attainment, progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
- My classroom visits, including the scrutiny of pupils' work, showed that pupils are routinely challenged with appropriate tasks across the curriculum. Teachers' questioning is effective in assessing understanding and moving learning on at the right level for individuals. Detailed analysis of pre-learning tasks ensures that

teachers know precisely what pupils need to learn next. Teaching is adapted to address gaps in pupils' understanding. Recent improvements to the teaching of grammar as a result of effective professional development have ensured that challenge has improved in this subject. Work in books confirms this. Pupils say that they are challenged in their learning, especially in mathematics.

- Your work to improve the progress that pupils make in mathematics has been effective. Leaders have introduced a wide range of teaching strategies which focus clearly on problem-solving and reasoning. A recent strategy to improve pupils' recall of multiplication facts is rapidly having an impact on attainment. During our classroom visits, we observed that teachers ensure that pupils have a deep level of understanding of any calculation methods that are taught. Pupils' independence is high because they use the carefully thought out learning prompts displayed in the classrooms when they get stuck.
- Both girls and boys enjoy their mathematics immensely. The attainment of girls and boys in mathematics is similar across the school. However, the information given to governors currently does not provide enough opportunities for them to understand the progress that different groups are making in the school. This hampers governors in holding leaders to account.
- Leaders have established a clear strategy to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well. The pupil premium leader is relentless in her approach to ensuring that this group of pupils succeed. All staff have a thorough understanding of the barriers to learning faced by these pupils. Attendance of disadvantaged pupils is improving. Detailed plans, which include specific targets for pupils, are reviewed regularly. Leaders identify quickly any pupil who is at risk of falling behind and take swift action to address this. As a result, the progress that disadvantaged pupils are making is in line with their classmates. Rightly, leaders have identified the need to improve outcomes further for this group of pupils so that they match those of other pupils nationally.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they strengthen their analysis and evaluation of the progress of different groups so that they know how well different groups of pupils are progressing
- they continue to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils so that more of these pupils meet the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy to discuss the school's effectiveness. We visited lessons to observe pupils' learning, speak to them and look at their work. We looked at the quality of pupils' work in books. I considered 90 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the free-text comments from some. Responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire were also considered. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day, and to a representative from the local authority on the telephone. I met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body, and spoke to a group of pupils about their school. I also met with three middle leaders. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of documents were examined, including: the school's self-evaluation and school improvement planning; pupils' progress information; and attendance information and policies.