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26 November 2015

Mrs N Davies
Executive headteacher
Sutton Road Primary School
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Dear Mrs Davies

Short inspection of Sutton Road Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 3 November 2015 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 May 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 are a confident and knowledgeable executive headteacher who sets high expectations for all staff and pupils in the school. You are supported well by the head of school who, along with you and other senior leaders, has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and the things that need further improvement so that Sutton Road Primary becomes an outstanding school.

The school's governing body is effective. Governors are committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve their potential and make progress that is nothing less than good. This commitment includes progress for disadvantaged pupils, whose outcomes governors monitor particularly closely. Governors are keen to ensure that gaps in attainment for these pupils continue to close over time. Governors also insist that all teaching must be at least good, and do not award pay rises to those teachers who do not meet their targets to ensure their pupils achieve well. Governors receive regular training, including about new areas of concern such as radicalisation.

Though governors have an accurate understanding of the school and challenge leaders effectively, they are not quite as knowledgeable about the progress in different year groups as they could be. On occasion, you have presented governors

with too much information, which makes it more difficult for them to see specifically which areas need most attention.

You have successfully addressed all the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, when lessons did not always offer effective challenge for the most-able pupils. At that time, inspectors also judged that pupils did not always present their written work well and, in addition, that teachers did not give pupils sufficient opportunities to develop their skills in investigations. Teachers now ensure that they give all pupils, including the most able, work that challenges them effectively and makes them think hard. Pupils now complete their work neatly and carefully. Teachers ensure that pupils are able to investigate well by giving them regular opportunities to undertake problem-solving activities.

Teaching is good in all key stages in the school. Teachers work as a united team who collaborate well to share ideas and learn from each other. They have a consistent approach to how they teach. You and other members of staff are supporting well those teachers who are new to their career, and those whose teaching is not yet consistently good, so that they can improve. The teachers that I met believe that the advice they are receiving is very useful to them.

As a result of good teaching, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make effective progress. Adults support lower-attaining pupils well and ensure that these pupils become increasingly independent. All pupils I met during my visit said that they enjoy their lessons very much because they are so interesting. They sometimes find their work very tricky, but do not mind this, and will keep going until they have solved a problem. Many pupils told me that they like work that is challenging.

While they are well prepared for the next stage of their education, pupils say that they are concerned about their future employment when they grow up. They say they do not have a good understanding of the opportunities for higher education and the different careers available to them. You recognise that these links are not as developed as they could be, and that this limits pupils' future aspirations.

Relationships are a strength of the school. Pupils respect each other and cooperate closely, as well as demonstrating a great deal of respect for adults in school. In turn, adults respect all pupils and encourage, and value, their ideas and opinions. Pupils value greatly the school's 'pupil forums' that help them to make a valuable contribution to areas such as the curriculum, fundraising and enterprise.

Last year you noticed that the absence rate for a small minority of pupils was increasing. As a result, you have taken effective action to address this. You and the school's attendance officer work well with families whose children's attendance is becoming a concern. Through good communication and support, along with rigorous checking, pupils' attendance this year is in line with the latest nationally published averages. The number of persistent absentees has also reduced.

Parents overall are very supportive of the school. The positive responses from your recent survey of parents are reflected in Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. A very large majority of parents believe that the school is well led and managed and say that they would recommend the school to other parents. As one parent who responded to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire wrote, 'Sutton Road has brought out the best in my child.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other senior leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records, including the single central register, are detailed and of high quality. The school's policy is up to date and reflects the good practice to keep pupils safe in school.

All staff are well trained, including in recent issues such as radicalisation and the exploitation of children. They are very aware of the need to ensure that every pupil is protected. Staff know the warning signs of potential abuse of children and the procedure to report any concern. Evidence in case files that I looked at during my visit confirms that you and other senior leaders monitor the welfare of pupils closely and make appropriate, and prompt, referrals to outside agencies wherever this is needed. You do not hesitate to insist that these agencies respond appropriately if you feel that they are not doing so.

Pupils who I met during my visit say that they feel very safe in school and can talk to any adult there and that the adult would help them if they were worried. Pupils are insistent that there is almost no bullying, and very little name-calling. When bullying does happen, staff deal with it effectively and immediately. The overwhelming majority of those parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their child feels safe at the school.

Inspection findings

- The leadership of the school is highly effective because leaders have a shared understanding of the strengths of the school and those areas that need improvement in order for the school to become outstanding. Their view of the school is accurate and based on a wide range of evidence from observation in classrooms, pupils' books, information on pupils' progress and from discussions with parents and pupils. From this, leaders have drawn up plans with appropriate actions for improvement. These are well monitored and reviewed to ensure that they are effective.
- Senior leaders are a cohesive and united team who work closely together to model high expectations across the school. They help all teachers to improve their practice continually, and particularly those teachers whose teaching is

not yet consistently good. Staff have a shared approach to their work and leaders encourage them to learn from each other. Leaders give very effective support to those teachers who are beginning their career. These teachers say that they feel valued and that leaders are helping them to ensure that their skills increase quickly.

- The governing body is an effective group who are determined to see that all pupils succeed. Governors ensure that they receive a high level of training, including about recent issues such as extremism and child sexual exploitation. They are very clear that teaching at Sutton Road Primary needs to be consistently good. They do not hesitate to take tough decisions on pay where teachers do not meet their performance management targets. Governors monitor the school well and are effective overall at holding senior leaders to account. Records of governing body meetings I looked at showed evidence of searching questions regarding pupils' performance. However, though the governors' view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is accurate, they are less confident about the performance of specific year groups of pupils. This is because some of the information governors receive from senior leaders is too detailed, making it difficult for governors to hold leaders to account as effectively as they could do.
- Leaders have addressed successfully all the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Teachers now challenge pupils of all abilities, including the most able, effectively in lessons. Teachers ask pupils difficult questions and, in turn, pupils respond well. Pupils I spoke to during my visit said that they enjoy work that is difficult, and would much rather have a test where they made a small number of errors rather than one that was too easy. They explained that making mistakes was a natural part of learning that they welcomed. Pupils' work I examined during my visit confirmed that pupils undertake their work neatly and with pride. Many pupils are very industrious, having completed a large amount of work in their books since the start of the new school year. Where the work they receive is particularly challenging, pupils persist until they have found solutions. Pupils are skilled at investigations in different subjects. For example, pupils' books in Year 2 showed that they had recently undertaken a visit to the local river to hunt for different materials. Pupils had then carefully investigated the properties of the materials they had found. Other pupils' books from different year groups showed many mathematics problems that pupils had to solve.
- Pupils' work that I examined during my visit showed that disadvantaged pupils are making good progress. Teachers and teaching assistants are helping lower-attaining pupils to catch up and make good progress in their writing. For example, pupils in Year 1 were learning about adjectives and were writing sentences such as 'The clock on Big Ben chimes as loud as a firework.'

- Last year leaders noted that absence for some groups of pupils was increasing. Leaders have since improved communication with all parents to emphasise the importance of good attendance and to make it clear that absences will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Leaders monitor the absence of all pupils well and support those parents who have children with lower attendance. As a result, the number of persistent absentees has reduced. All groups of pupils now have attendance rates broadly in line with the latest published national averages.
- Pupils feel that adults in the school greatly value and respect their opinions and thoughts. They say that the school's 'pupil forums' give them a chance to contribute to many aspects of the school, including the curriculum they are taught, arranging their own fundraising projects, and ensuring that pupils remain well behaved and attend punctually. Because pupils feel valued themselves, they respect teachers and support staff greatly in return. All pupils who I met during my visit also told me that they enjoy coming to school greatly. They say that teachers help them to feel both unique and special. One pupil summed up their views by saying, 'It makes you feel exhilarated when you first step in the school gates. No matter who you are or where you're from, you are made to feel good.'
- Parents are very positive about the school. Results from the school's own questionnaire of parents' views reflect those responses to Ofsted's Parent View. Almost all parents confirm that their child is safe and happy at the school and makes good progress there. A very large majority believe that their child is well taught and that pupils are well behaved. The same proportion of parents believe that the school is well led and managed and that the school responds well to any concerns they raise.
- Safeguarding is effective because leaders have ensured that the protection of pupils is a priority. Leaders have created a culture where both pupils and staff are encouraged to talk about any concerns they have. Leaders make it clear that those concerns will result in appropriate and prompt action whenever this is needed. Pupils say that they can approach any member of staff if they are worried about something. All staff are highly trained, including in recent areas of concern such as radicalisation, and they report any concerns using the procedure set out in the school's safeguarding policy. The selection of records of concern that I viewed during my visit were kept systematically and were clear to follow. Leaders make referrals to a wide range of external agencies wherever appropriate, and do not hesitate in insisting that agencies take more action if they feel that the initial response they receive is insufficient.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- governors receive an appropriate level of information which enables them to challenge school leaders even more effectively
- pupils develop their understanding about the future options for their education and careers by developing links with the local and wider community.

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met you, the head of school, members of your senior leadership team, those who have responsibility for leading the teaching of English and mathematics, teachers in the early stages of their career and both the Chair and the vice chair of the Governing Body. I reviewed your school's self-evaluation document and your current school improvement plans and discussed these with you. We visited classrooms and learning areas across the school to observe teaching and to look at pupils' work. I evaluated your recent information about pupils' progress and examined minutes of meetings of the Governing Body. I met with the school's attendance officer to examine attendance records. I observed, and talked with pupils at lunchtime. I reviewed samples of documentation for, and referrals made in respect of, safeguarding and met with you and the head of school, who are two of the designated lead teachers for this area. I undertook a scrutiny of work from a sample of pupils from different year groups in the school. I considered the views of parents from your own recent questionnaire alongside the responses received from Ofsted's online Parent View.