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10 November 2017

Mrs Nicki Kadwill
Headteacher
Jotmans Hall Primary School
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Dear Mrs Kadwill

Short inspection of Jotmans Hall Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 2017 with Andrew Hemmings, HMI, 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 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You are determined to provide pupils with a high-quality education and this commitment has ensured a clear and unwavering focus on continual improvement. You, leaders and governors work very well as a team to ensure that pupils achieve well.

You have ensured that the learning environment that staff create for pupils is well organised, attractive and engaging. In every classroom and across the school, displays celebrate pupils' achievements and remind them of all that they have learned. Your high expectations are consistently evident in all classes, through the agreed features that you expect to see in every class. This includes, for example, displays of pupils' learning in literacy and mathematics, and class rules and routines.

Pupils are happy and safe at Jotmans Hall Primary School. Through the broad and interesting curriculum you provide, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and life in modern Britain. Pupils behave very well because expectations are high and rules are clear. Pupils are polite and friendly, good mannered and welcoming. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect in the school and adults model clearly how pupils should behave in their interactions with each other. Older pupils relish the many opportunities they have to develop leadership skills and help younger pupils. Pupils proudly told inspectors that they enjoy undertaking roles such as house captain, wet-play monitor and librarian because, 'it makes us independent, sensible and caring.'

The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that their children are happy and safe in school. One parent summed up the views of many by commenting: 'My children are happy, safe and well cared for whilst at school. I am very happy with the school and the quality of education my children receive.' Another parent stated that the school is a place, 'where pupils are not only challenged and fulfilled, but are happy and excited about their school day'.

Governors know the school well and are clear about the strengths and areas for improvement. They support and challenge you appropriately to ensure that pupils receive a good education. Governors are well informed and visit the school regularly. You, your leaders and governors have maintained and developed the strengths identified in the previous inspection report, and made good progress towards achieving successful improvements.

One area for improvement identified at the previous inspection was to make sure that teachers show pupils how to improve their work. Through observing lessons and looking in workbooks, it is clear that pupils in all classes are given the opportunity to reflect on teachers' comments and to identify what they need to do to make better progress. This enables pupils to be clear about how to achieve further success. Pupils appreciate the guidance their teachers give them on how to improve their work. They told inspectors that the feedback they receive, 'is helpful' and 'pushes you to get better'.

Another area for improvement highlighted in the previous inspection was to ensure that the quality of teaching develops further by leaders giving teachers clear feedback on how to improve their teaching. You and the governors have involved all leaders, including subject leaders, in developing rigorous methods for ensuring consistency and high-quality teaching and learning. Leaders at all levels make regular checks through observations in classes and looking at pupils' work. This ensures that strengths in teaching are shared, and any weaknesses addressed. Teachers are encouraged to continually reflect on their practice and make sure that learning tasks are more precisely suited to pupils' learning needs. Less experienced teachers quickly develop their confidence and skills through the guidance and professional development provided by more experienced colleagues. By linking teachers' performance management targets to the school's priorities, leaders are very effective in continuing to secure and sustain school improvement.

You and the governors recognise that there are still areas to develop to move the school forward and you acknowledge that improving pupils' attendance is a main priority.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. You and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of a high quality. Recruitment checks are meticulously carried out by the school business manager. These are up to date and fully meet current

requirements. As a result, the school is a safe environment for pupils and they are well cared for at all times.

You and your effective designated safeguarding lead make sure that all staff have regular and appropriate training to understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. As a result, staff are clear about what they should do if they have any concerns. Your designated safeguarding lead works well with staff, parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. She ensures that any cases that need to be referred to external agencies, such as social services, are dealt with in a timely and effective manner.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel happy and settled in school. They also said that bullying is rare and that the adults quickly sort out any problems. Pupils feel proud of their school and they know how to keep safe, for example, when crossing the road, and when using the internet. Leaders provide workshops for parents on how they can keep their children safe, including when they are online at home.

Inspection findings

- In order to check whether the school remains good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry. Firstly, I considered the quality of teaching and learning in early years and the progress children make during their time in Reception. This is because, since the previous inspection, published data shows that the proportion of children in early years who achieve the expected level for children of their age has risen from below to above the national average. I was interested to see what actions you have taken to improve the outcomes for your youngest children.
- Since the previous inspection, you and your staff have reviewed the early years curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of all children. Staff quickly and carefully assess children's strengths and the gaps in their knowledge and understanding to plan interesting and challenging learning activities. For example, when they arrive at the school, many children have limited speech, language and communication skills. Because of this, staff provide a learning environment that is rich in opportunities that help to develop children's language, their vocabulary and their communication skills.
- During the inspection, children were enthusiastically taking part in a range of engaging activities, both inside the classroom and outdoors. Teachers and teaching assistants were modelling speaking in complete sentences, and skilfully questioning children to develop their language and help them to persevere with their learning. Looking at the work produced in children's learning journeys, it is clearly evident that the children in the Reception classes make good progress from varying starting points, particularly in reading and writing.
- Another line of enquiry focused on how effectively phonics is taught, and whether pupils make good enough progress in this area from their starting points. The published data shows that the proportion of pupils that reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has been below the national average for the last three years.

- You and your leaders are rightly taking effective action to tackle the previous weaknesses in phonics teaching. You are currently reviewing the teaching approaches used across the school with good effect. For example, inspectors observed a lively and fun phonics session in the Reception class. The children were highly engaged and motivated as they sorted different objects according to their initial sounds. Children demonstrated a high level of phonic knowledge and were confident in using and applying their skills to identify sounds when reading different words.
- Pupils' progress in phonics is closely tracked, and targeted support is put in place to address any underachievement in order to improve pupils' outcomes. You acknowledge that while your focus on giving additional support to those pupils who need to catch up is effective, expectations are not always high enough for more confident pupils in key stage 1. For these pupils, some phonics sessions do not have sufficient pace and challenge. As a result, not all pupils attain as highly as they could. You are in the process of arranging training for all staff to improve the quality of phonics teaching further across key stage 1.
- Finally, I considered how well pupils are supported and encouraged to attend school. This line of enquiry arose from historical information showing that not all pupils attended school as often as they should. I looked at rates of attendance and, specifically, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Previously, these groups have had particularly high rates of absence, including persistent absence.
- Leaders and governors are aware of the need to improve attendance, and rigorous procedures are already in place to establish the reasons for any pupil's absence. You are quick to address attendance issues; for example, staff phone parents at the start of the day when pupils do not turn up for school.
- Your focused actions are having a positive impact and the attendance figures for the school, and particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are improving. However, there are still a number of pupils who, for various and sometimes complex reasons, are regularly absent. Pupils' attendance remains a school improvement priority.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the number of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check by the end of Year 1 is at least in line with the national average
- the most able pupils are challenged enough to reach higher standards of work in phonics
- recent work to improve pupils' attendance continues so that the school's attendance figures are at least in line with national averages, and the number of pupils who fail to attend the school regularly continues to reduce.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Webb
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Meetings were held with you, one of your assistant headteachers and governors, including the chair of governors. We discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement, and information about current pupils' attendance, progress and attainment.

Inspectors carried out joint observations of teaching and learning in all classes with you and the assistant headteacher; they also sampled pupils' current work across all subjects and across a wide range of abilities. Inspectors heard some pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 read. Inspectors talked to pupils about their reading habits and looked at their reading records. Inspectors spoke informally to a number of pupils in classrooms about their learning, and met more formally with a group of pupils to talk about their school experience.

Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff, and case studies about referrals made to external agencies. A discussion was held with the assistant headteacher as the school's designated safeguarding lead. I spoke to the school's external adviser on the telephone about how they support the school.

The views of 52 parents who responded to Parent View were taken into account, as well as the 52 responses parents made using the free-text service. Inspectors also considered the six responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the 46 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.