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Ms Julie Davey
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Davey

Short inspection of Aragon Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2017 with Lisa Farrow, Ofsted Inspector, 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

When you arrived at the beginning of this academic year, you quickly established new priorities for improvement based on a thorough evaluation of the school's work. You rightly noted that rates of absence were too high for certain groups, particularly pupils eligible for free school meals and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. You have swiftly put measures in place to remedy this. A number of other new staff joined at the same time and you successfully made sure that pupils were not unsettled by these changes. With strong support from the governing body, you have built a dynamic new team. You have ensured that staff receive high-quality training to be able to meet your highly ambitious expectations. New and more established leaders are working well together to meet current priorities. You use the expertise of your staff, a number of whom are lead teachers within the local authority, to develop teaching well. You are building strong relationships with the school community. A number of parents we spoke to, and those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, were very complimentary about you and your team.

The previous inspection identified that pupils' skills in mathematics were not as well developed as those in reading and writing, and that the most able pupils were not always stretched in their thinking. Leaders put a range of new measures in place so that, the year after the inspection, outcomes in mathematics rose in key stage 2 and there have also been positive gains in key stage 1 more recently. Most-able pupils also performed well. However, outcomes in writing dipped significantly and were well below national figures in 2015 for all groups, including the most able pupils. Leaders acted effectively to rectify this. In 2016, progress in writing for the most able was significantly better than average at the end of Year 6. Weaknesses remained for less able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which you are addressing well.

Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is calm and productive. Pupils show courtesy and respect; they hold doors open and make way for others to pass. When walking around the school, in addition to noticing the way pupils focused well on their work, we were impressed with the high quality of pupils' art on display.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leadership team and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality. All staff understand their duty to ensure that pupils are kept safe. You and your designated officers are tenacious in following up any referrals made to outside agencies. Governors take their role in safeguarding very seriously. They regularly verify that all the necessary training is in place and that the checks on the suitability of staff meet requirements.

Parents told us that their children feel safe and enjoy coming to school. The very large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire and a recent school survey support this view.

Inspection findings

- You have introduced a range of measures to promote good attendance. You and your staff regularly evaluate how effective these measures are and adapt them as necessary. As a consequence, attendance has improved for many pupils this year. Leaders work closely with the educational welfare officer to ensure that pupils attend regularly. However, while overall attendance compares well with national figures, absence rates are too high for pupils who are eligible for free school meals. You and your staff are working diligently to address this. You know which pupils' attendance is a cause for concern and are keen to explore other strategies to raise attendance further.

- You have continued the good work, started prior to your arrival, on improving writing. The leaders overseeing these improvements have ensured that the curriculum offers pupils the chance to write about themes that interest them. We saw Year 6 pupils preparing to write a balanced argument for and against home schooling and Year 1 pupils keenly describing 'Little Red Riding Hood'. Your team has also ensured that grammar is taught systematically across the school and that pupils have the opportunity to practise the grammar skills they are learning in their written work. These improvements are raising the standard of writing further.
- In early years, there are opportunities for children to write both inside and outside. For example, in the garage area, children regularly record 'what needs fixing' on clipboards. Inside, adults were using the story 'Jack and the Beanstalk' to promote writing. Children of all abilities were really enjoying repeating 'fee, fi, fo, fum' to get into the right mood to write to the giant. There was a strong emphasis on the language of the story so that children were confident in using this themselves.
- The least able children are supported well. Inspectors observed instances of adults effectively intervening well to help them understand how to write their names or to prompt them to sound out letters. Children are motivated and excited by the writing opportunities your team creates.
- You have ensured that writing is taught consistently well across key stage 1 and key stage 2. The teaching of writing is planned carefully so that skills are introduced, a subject is explored, and then pupils begin to craft longer pieces of writing which they subsequently revise. These sequences support pupils to develop and embed new skills well.
- You acknowledge that the support provided in lessons to the least able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not always carefully tailored enough to meet their specific needs. This makes it harder for some of them to make the rapid progress needed to catch up with their peers.
- We explored how leaders inform parents about the curriculum because the new website does not yet have all the necessary information on it. Equally, a few parents reported that they did not feel that they had enough current information about what their children were learning. Leaders were able to show us the range of letters they had sent out and the effective steps they had taken to keep parents informed until the completion of the new website.
- The pupils who read to me could all talk about how their reading skills have improved. The least able readers tackled unfamiliar words well, correcting themselves on the rare occasion they made a mistake.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils' attendance improves to at least match that of their peers
- the needs of less able pupils and those who have special educational needs are more precisely met, so that they can make rapid progress and catch up quickly where necessary.

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

Yours sincerely

Jeanie Jovanova
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- I met with you, the senior management team, middle leaders, pupils, the local authority education partner and the chair of governors
- we visited classes when pupils were being taught writing across the school
- we listened to a selected group of pupils of different abilities reading
- we held informal discussions with pupils in lessons and when reading with them
- we had conversations with parents
- we undertook a scrutiny of work in books
- we evaluated information provided by the school including: safeguarding records; minutes of governing body meetings; reports from the local authority and external consultants; attendance information; the school's assessment of its performance and information about pupils' progress
- we considered the views in 82 responses to Parent View and the results of a recent parent survey by the school.