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24 July 2018

Mrs K Davies
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Dear Mrs Davies

Short inspection of Kensington Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You work effectively with your safeguarding team to ensure that pupils are well cared for and nurtured. You recognise that your school is situated in an area identified as having a very high level of deprivation. Additionally, you deal with a rate of pupil mobility that is higher than the national average. This means that many pupils are new to your school just prior to undertaking published assessments. Nevertheless, your ethos is simple and clear. You state that your pupils deserve the very best. As a result, your school has received a range of awards, including a reward for inclusion and the 'school of sanctuary award'.

The board of governors support the school's ethos. Members work closely with leaders to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school. Their work with subject leaders provides opportunities to analyse school performance and discuss improvement priorities. Almost all members of staff who responded to the staff survey during the inspection noted that leaders do all they can to ensure that the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching staff. This was evident during the inspection, where positive relationships were evident between staff and pupils.

The pupils I spoke to during the inspection were very proud of their school. They value their roles as pupil panel members and mathematics and reading ambassadors. Pupils also enjoy the rewards that they receive for regular attendance, such as a Hawaiian Day. One pupil, reflecting the views of others, said

that she was particularly proud of the school because teachers provide her with 'memories of lovely things'.

In the previous inspection, the inspectors reported that leaders should increase the level of challenge for the most able pupils. You provide a range of opportunities for the most able to take part in activities that challenge their thinking. Leaders monitor closely the progress of the most able pupils and provide additional support where they are falling short of their targets. As a result, the attainment of these pupils has improved.

Inspectors also noted that there was a need to set targets for pupils and review them closely. Leaders track the progress and attainment of all pupils. Regular pupil-progress meetings identify where pupils require extra support and ensure that learning matches pupils' needs. This was evident during the inspection where I observed teaching assistants working effectively with small groups of pupils to support their learning.

Finally, inspectors noted that leaders should provide pupils with opportunities to apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum. We agreed to consider this during the inspection as part of a wider analysis of mathematics teaching in school.

We discussed areas where further work is required to support school improvement. While pupils make good progress from their starting points, many have a limited vocabulary. Leaders are aware that they need to provide further opportunities to develop pupils' vocabulary to improve their performance in subjects such as reading, writing and grammar. Additionally, some subject leaders require further support and training to ensure that they identify key issues in their subjects and drive forward improvement through accurate improvement planning. Finally, opportunities to develop problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics are not consistent throughout school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Your school site is secure, and office staff check the identity of visitors on entry. Your safeguarding team ensure that pupils are well supported in areas which include attendance and well-being. The family support officer works effectively with other agencies so that the most vulnerable pupils are well supported and kept safe.

Parents are confident in the school's ability to care for their children. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that their children are happy and feel safe in school. One parent, reflecting the views of others, noted, 'I rate this school very highly because my daughter loves the school. There are so many activities for them to do.'

Pupils who I spoke to during the inspection said that their school is a safe place and lessons help them to understand how to protect themselves from harm both in the

real world and online. Pupils note that bullying is rare in school and where it does happen, teachers deal with it immediately.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection I shared several lines of enquiry with you. The first considered actions taken by leaders to improve the performance of pupils in phonics. Children enter school with skills below those typically expected for their age. You note that one of the greatest barriers to children's learning is their poor language development. To address this, leaders ensure that the teaching of phonics begins as soon as children enter Nursery. Staff receive training to develop their skills and teachers have opportunities to share the good practice of others. Parents have developed their understanding of phonics by taking part in activities with their children in school. As a result, the school's most recent unvalidated performance information in 2018 shows that the proportion of pupils achieving the phonic screening check in Year 1 is increasing. However, leaders are aware that the books that pupils take home to practise early reading do not consistently match the sounds that they are learning in school. As a result, pupils miss opportunities to develop further a deeper understanding of letters and sounds.
- The next area we looked at was how teachers are ensuring higher attainment for pupils in reading. Leaders are working effectively in this area to create a highly engaging reading environment throughout school. Leaders and teachers make a wide range of fiction books available for pupils in central areas and within reading corners in classrooms. However, a similar range of non-fiction books is not evident and accessible for pupils to read, which limits the range of vocabulary that leaders expose them to. Pupils spoken to during the inspection noted that they love reading but would like further information books relating to the topics that they study.
- You are aware of the need to develop pupils' reading skills and have included this as a priority in your development planning. Pupils develop a broad range of reading skills and have opportunities to study high-quality texts. In one lesson in a key stage 2 class, pupils were able to respond effectively to a fiction text. Through good-quality questioning, the teacher developed the pupils' reading and writing skills. Such links between subjects were evident in other lessons observed. As a result of this work, pupils' attainment is improving. The unvalidated performance information at the end of Year 6 in 2018 shows an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in reading. You are justly proud of the fact that your school recently achieved the gold level Liverpool Reading Quality Mark to acknowledge work undertaken to improve teaching and learning in reading.
- My final line of enquiry considered what leaders are doing to improve the attainment of pupils in writing, grammar, punctuation and mathematics. Although the progress that pupils make throughout school is strong, their attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2 remains below that seen nationally.
- Leaders ensure that teachers receive training to develop further their ability to teach basic mathematical skills. Your pupils particularly enjoy a new online

program introduced to develop their multiplication and division skills. Pupils said that the opportunities this program provides to challenge each other have supported their learning. Teachers also ensure that pupils regularly apply their mathematical skills in other subjects such as science, geography and design technology. As a result of this focus, the school's most recent unvalidated performance information in 2018 shows an increase in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected and higher standards in mathematics at key stage 1. You are justly proud to have received the Liverpool Counts Quality Mark at gold level. This acknowledges the work undertaken by leaders to develop pupils' basic skills in mathematics.

- Pupils spoken to during the inspection noted that they would like more opportunities to undertake problem-solving activities in their mathematics lessons. During the inspection, an analysis of pupils' work in books showed that the teaching of problem-solving was inconsistent over time. Leaders are aware that they need to provide further opportunities to develop pupils' skills in this area. However, they are not currently addressing this issue in the school's improvement planning. This has led to an inconsistent approach to the teaching of this aspect of mathematics throughout school.
- You have taken decisive and effective steps to improve writing. Teachers use training opportunities to ensure that pupils' sentence-building skills are improving. They provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop their writing skills across the curriculum in subjects such as history, religious education and reading. The school's published performance information for 2017 shows that pupils are making stronger progress in writing by the end of Year 6. However, in areas where school improvement planning is weaker, such as in the development of grammar, spelling and punctuation, pupils' attainment is lower.
- You have an uncompromising focus on pupils' personal, social and health education. For example, you use your sports premium funding effectively to provide a range of extra-curricular activities. Additionally, you offer targeted support to those pupils who struggle with their weight and are less active. Your catering service ensures a healthy diet and leaders and teachers promote healthy lifestyles in school. As a result, you have gained the Liverpool Healthy School Award. Pupils spoken to during the inspection demonstrated a clear understanding of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of pupils achieving the phonic screening check continues to improve by ensuring that the books pupils take home to read in early years and key stage 1 match the sounds that pupils are learning in phonics lessons
- pupils have regular access to a broad range of non-fiction books in classrooms and around school to develop further their vocabulary and accelerate learning in reading, writing and grammar

- pupils have regular opportunities to undertake problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics. This is to ensure that a greater proportion achieve the expected and higher standards of attainment by the end of key stage 2
- subject leaders receive the support and training required to identify key issues, drive forward improvements and contribute effectively to school improvement planning.

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

Yours sincerely

Gill Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your deputy headteacher and senior leaders to discuss issues relating to school improvement. I also met with six governors, including the chair of the governing body. I spoke with the school's administrative officer about staff recruitment procedures. I met your safeguarding team to discuss procedures to keep pupils safe. I also met with the school's improvement officer from the local authority. I had a formal discussion with a group of pupils about their personal development, behaviour and welfare. We also discussed their learning.

Accompanied by you, I visited a range of classes across the school. I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and as they moved around the school. I scrutinised examples of pupils' work and reviewed documents, including your record of checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. I also examined the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning and current performance information. I considered 41 responses to Ofsted's staff survey, 54 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey, and 10 responses in free text. I also considered information posted on the school's website and a letter provided by a family member.