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Mrs Sandra Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Southville Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 2017, 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 September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is because you have been proactive in responding to the evolving needs of the school and the pupils since its expansion in 2014. This process has undoubtedly brought challenges to leaders in many ways. Overall however, you have kept pupils' safety, well-being and learning at the forefront of your thinking. This has been paramount in maintaining the positive culture and ethos of the school across both sites and is reflected in the views of pupils and the majority of parents. Indeed, one parent whose view was typical wrote, 'The school offers an excellent amount of support and educates my child in a way she needs to keep learning fun.'

Together with other leaders and the local authority, you have accurately identified and tackled the right priorities for improvement. This has meant that the drive for continuous improvement is present in your work, resulting in good or rapidly improving outcomes for pupils. For example, in 2016 very poor rates of progress in pupils' writing at the end of key stage 2 led you and your leadership team to review the quality of teaching and provision in this aspect. High-quality training for staff has impacted positively on the quality of pupils' writing. Writing outcomes improved in 2017 and the quality of writing by current pupils is continuing to rise.

A further key feature of your work is in the identification and training of senior staff to increase the capacity of the school. You have a core group of effective leaders in various roles who contribute effectively to self-evaluation and review. The value you

and governors place on staff development and nurturing talent strengthens the work of the school.

Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to the school to learn. They interact harmoniously and show respect and care towards one another. This is a common characteristic on both sites of the school. Pupils told me, 'This is a happy school.'

Since the last inspection, you have ensured that pupils are now taking greater responsibility and ownership in their learning. They receive guidance and support in evaluating their work, including through peer-to-peer activities. As a result, pupils check their understanding regularly and enter into useful dialogue with teachers. This is beneficial in enabling pupils to know what they have to do next to improve. In addition, you have responded well to the previous inspection issue about challenge in the early years. The seamless transition for children in the Nursery to the Reception Year, coupled with the appointment of an effective early years leader is having a positive effect on the quality of provision in the early years foundation stage.

However, as we discussed during the visit, there are areas for continued work and development. Most notably, a few pupils still do not make as much progress in writing in key stage 2 as they are fully capable of, especially the most able pupils. Furthermore, there is not always enough focus on the progress being made by disadvantaged pupils across the school so that they can catch up with their peers. Finally, the systems you use for tracking pupils' progress do not always take full account of pupils' prior attainment. This means that intervention is too slow for a few pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

Your attention to safeguarding is appropriately robust and rigorous. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records, including the single central register are well maintained. Staff are fully vetted and trained well to be vigilant. As a result, staff are aware and mindful of safeguarding and protecting children at all times. Following a previous review, you have developed a 'safeguarding team' to ensure that there is the capacity to deal swiftly and effectively with safeguarding issues. The culture for safeguarding pupils is a strength of the school. To these ends, you have acted with tenacity to protect and support pupils, for example those at risk of being missing from education.

Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how they may keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. This includes when working online. For example, Year 5 pupils spoke confidently about how to withhold personal details and to report suspicious activity. They speak positively about the school and confirm that adults listen to them, including if they have to use a 'worry box' in their classroom.

Inspection findings

- My first key line of enquiry focused on pupils' progress in writing in key stage 2,

especially for the most able pupils. Following the very low outcomes in 2016 and the positive signs of recovery in 2017, we agreed that this should be 'tested' to validate the ongoing work of staff and governors in this area. Current work in pupils' books shows sustained improvement.

- Pupils are given opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and across the curriculum. Carefully chosen strategies are enabling pupils to emulate the writing style of others and to have opportunities to write successfully. Often writing is lengthy and well sustained with appropriate features and devices reflecting age-appropriate content. The impact of leaders' work over time is clearly evidenced in the current writing outcomes of the pupils, which are continuing to improve over time.
- You and other leaders, including governors, recognise that there is still much more to do to improve on the school's current position, especially in supporting the most able pupils to reach the higher standards they are capable of in writing. We noted that there is sometimes a lack of challenge or ambition to ensure that the most able pupils can make greater progress across key stage 2, also, that pupils can regularly apply technical skills and knowledge in punctuation and grammar to improve the quality of writing. This is particularly true in enabling the most able pupils to demonstrate increased sophistication in their writing.
- My second line of enquiry focused on how well leaders and teachers are supporting disadvantaged pupils to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. You have implemented a strategy with governors to raise the profile of disadvantaged pupils in the school. As part of this, you have introduced a family liaison worker to engage with pupils and their families. This is having a positive impact.
- In addition, you closely track the progress of every disadvantaged pupil and evaluate the individual impact of interventions. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are now making more rapid progress and their attendance has risen to 96%. However, you and your governors are aware that there still remains a difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers which continues to require attention. You have included this already as part of your school improvement plan. We also discussed the benefits that an external review of pupil premium may have to provide an extra steer and further guidance.
- My third line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of leadership and management. This is because, in 2016, some key attainment measures dropped below the national average. These included outcomes for children at the end of Reception and the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Your identification and training for senior leaders is paying dividends. You have secured a confident and knowledgeable leadership team with clearly defined accountabilities. This enables leaders to focus on improvement priorities. As a result, the new early years leader is having a transformational impact in the early years and the school's 'good level of attainment' has risen to 75% (from 58% in the previous year). Similarly, results in the Year 1 phonics screening check have risen from 65% to 80%. In other aspects of the school's work, leaders are contributing positively and proactively to school improvement with proven capacity to secure improvement.

- Leaders use systems and processes to check pupils' progress and you hold discussions with teachers to hold them to account. However, as we discussed, you do not always make best use of this in checking back to pupils' prior attainment. Furthermore, the depth and quality of discussions lacks the detail, precision or regularity to enable some pupils to make strong progress in writing over time.
- My fourth line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements to promote a strong culture for safeguarding pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in writing continues to improve rapidly in key stage 2 especially ensuring that the most able pupils can reach the higher standards they are capable of
- systems for checking pupils' ongoing progress are strengthened so that targeted support can be matched even more closely to pupils' needs.

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

Yours sincerely

Stewart Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We agreed the timetable and inspection activities for the day. I worked extensively with you and the deputy headteacher throughout the inspection. I met with the deputy headteacher, Year 6 teacher, English subject leader as well as the early years leader at the Merrywoods site. I scrutinised safeguarding records, including staff recruitment and vetting procedures, and recent audits, and reviewed evidence for reporting children missing in education. Together, we visited lessons in the early years foundation stage, key stages 1 and 2. This involved looking at books and talking with pupils in line with our agreed key lines of enquiry. I also met with representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and samples of local authority visit notes. I also spoke with the local authority adviser for the school. Furthermore, I took full account of the 117 responses to Parent View and the additional comments made by parents via texts received for the inspection.