

15 March 2019

Mrs J Conner
Headteacher
Poulner Infant School
North Poulner Road
Ringwood
Hampshire
BH24 3LA

Dear Mrs Conner

Short inspection of Poulner Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 2019, 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 March 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have provided strong, outward-looking leadership, which has driven the development of the school and its capacity for further improvement. The appointment of a deputy headteacher in 2016 has increased leadership capacity and the confidence that you show in your staff has enabled them to take risks and to try out new ideas in their classroom without fear of failure. Along with your deputy and governors, you have an accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas for further improvement.

Pupils' behaviour is good around the school and pupils play well together at breaktimes. They enjoy learning. They describe it as 'exciting' and 'fun' and their teachers as 'kind' and 'helpful'. Pupils' enthusiasm for your school is echoed by parents. One of many comments I received illustrates this: 'My child loves the school so much that she is first at the gate in the morning and is always upset during half-term as she wants to be at school.'

Governors are highly supportive of the school. They know the school well and hold leaders to account. For example, following a work scrutiny with staff, they challenged leaders over the quality of writing in literacy compared to that in other subjects. As a result, leaders addressed this issue, and the quality of writing found in pupils' books is now similar, regardless of the subject being studied.

You have effectively addressed the areas for improvement that inspectors identified at the last inspection. New assessment procedures and practices ensure that pupils'

progress is now carefully monitored. In addition, staff are now held more readily to account for their pupils' progress. The introduction of 'scoop and challenge' sessions, where pupils receive support or further enrichment, ensures that work is now closely matched to their individual needs. These sessions are having a positive effect on the progress of all pupils. Additionally, parents are highly complimentary about the home/school online system which was introduced to inform them of their children's progress in early years.

The previous report also recommended that the role of subject leaders be further developed, and it is evident that this role has undergone many changes since the last inspection. Initially, curriculum teams were made up of teachers from across each year group. You found, however, that this approach was not effective and, in September 2018, you changed back to subject leadership. Subject leaders have a good knowledge of their area of responsibility and how it fits into the overall curriculum plan. They are given many opportunities to check that their subject is covered appropriately and that pupils are making progress. They do this by undertaking a range of activities, including work sampling, moderation activities and interviewing pupils. Leaders have also been instrumental in forming a teaching and learning community in partnership with three local schools. This has enabled staff to undertake personalised enquiry-based research on their educational interests. Subject leaders I spoke to during the inspection reported that the opportunities given to undertake educational research were having a positive impact on their subject leadership.

Most parents are highly supportive of the school. All who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said that they would recommend the school to other parents. One parent, reflecting the views of many, said, 'I have found the school to be an engaging, nurturing, happy school. We feel extremely lucky to have such a school on our doorstep.'

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are of a high quality. Leaders complete careful safeguarding checks for all staff, governors and volunteers. You ensure that all staff receive up-to-date training in keeping children safe. Governors receive appropriate safeguarding training and regularly check school procedures.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are confident that, should they have any concerns or worries, an adult in the school would listen to them and help them. Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is and say that it does not happen at their school, but, if it did, a member of staff would deal with it quickly. Parents who responded to Parent View share this view.

Inspection findings

- We agreed to look at the following specific areas of the school's provision: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; pupils' attendance; the progress of disadvantaged pupils; and how well pupils develop their writing skills.
- Pupils' attendance had been falling gradually over the past three years and in 2018 it fell to below the national average. Leaders have engaged with parents in a variety of ways, including face-to-face meetings and regular newsletters home, to emphasise the importance and benefits of good attendance. Actions taken have resulted in improved attendance across the school. Most recent attendance figures for all pupils at the school are now above the national average.
- Pupils have not been achieving as well in writing at the end of key stage 1 as in reading and mathematics, especially at the higher standard. Since spring 2018, leaders have changed the way that writing is taught across the school. Key, high-quality texts, which link to cross curricular topic work, have been introduced, to expose pupils to rich vocabulary and to 'hook' their interest. For example, during the inspection, pupils were engrossed in producing high-quality writing based on 'Tinga tinga tales'. Pupils spoke excitedly to me about their work, which had involved planning, self-editing and improvement, creating artwork for book covers and, finally, publishing their finished story. Work in books seen during the inspection also indicates that pupils are now given far more opportunities to apply their writing skills across the curriculum, for example in science or design technology sessions. Leaders recognise that these recent changes, although successful, need more time to become fully embedded across the curriculum.
- Leaders are determined to ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive the support that will help them succeed both socially and academically. The pupil premium champion has established a good working relationship with the families of disadvantaged pupils. This, in turn, has enabled her to ensure that the most effective support is given to each family. Interventions are closely aligned to the unique needs of each pupil and are tracked and adjusted as needed, to ensure that progress is made. Work in books and school progress information indicates that most disadvantaged pupils are making strong progress. The difference that existed between their performance and that of other pupils is diminishing. The most able disadvantaged pupils are challenged appropriately through enrichment activities. Leaders are committed to 'not putting a cap' on learning and to supporting all pupils to extend their learning, for example by following up their own enquiries during 'scoop and challenge' sessions.
- Disadvantaged pupils who also have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive carefully tailored intervention programmes. These interventions are carefully monitored and adjusted as necessary. Current progress data and work in books show that these pupils are making good progress from their various starting points.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements made in the teaching of writing are further developed and embedded to enable a higher proportion of pupils to attain the higher standards by the end of key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Macdonald
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I met with you to discuss the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement. I held discussions with subject leaders and members of the governing body. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I considered documentation relating to governance, safeguarding and pupils' progress and attainment. I took account of the 71 responses to Ofsted's confidential survey, Parent View. I spoke to several parents before school and considered 53 free-text messages submitted to Ofsted, one letter handed to me during the inspection and one e-mail sent directly to Ofsted. I talked to pupils both in classrooms and at breaktimes and took account of an in-school survey of their views of the school.