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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Jane Wood
Headteacher
Hollybrook Junior School
Seagarth Lane
Southampton
Hampshire
SO16 6RL

Dear Mrs Wood

Short inspection of Hollybrook Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 10 January 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 worked well with other leaders and staff to continue strengthening various aspects of the school. You have high aspirations for the pupils and you make sure that they take part in a wide variety of experiences. Visits to places such as the Mayflower Theatre and Marwell Zoo bring learning to life and contribute positively to the curriculum and to pupils' personal development. Pupils are encouraged to be curious, creative and confident.

Pupils speak very warmly about their school. They enjoy coming to school and say that staff are kind and help them to learn well. Pupils confirm that staff act decisively should they need help of any sort. Pupils' behaviour around the school and their attitudes to learning are positive. One pupil described lessons as 'gripping'. Another pupil said, 'Sometimes we just want to carry on with our work and don't want to stop.'

Parents value the school's work with their children. They say that their children like school and that staff are supportive and ambitious. One parent said, 'They [the pupils] are helped when they find a subject difficult and are pushed when they are doing well.' Parents appreciate the work of leaders and staff, and feel confident that their children are safe and well cared for. Parents value the good communication and believe their views and any concerns are listened to and acted on. Another parent commented, 'The staff are caring and responsive when approached.'

Governors and trustees of the multi-academy trust share your determination and high expectations to ensure that the school's provision fully meets pupils' learning and welfare needs. They have a precise understanding of the school's effectiveness, including of pupils' achievement, through their well-focused visits to lessons and their meetings with staff and with pupils.

You have responded effectively to the areas for improvement identified from the last inspection. During lessons, staff provide good advice for pupils about how to improve their work. You have also made sure that teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in mathematics. As a result, pupils, especially the most able pupils are challenged effectively. Pupils are challenged rigorously by 'depth' questions that stretch their thinking and ensure that progress is rapid.

Although achievement in reading is good, the teaching of reading has some weaknesses. You know that there are times when tasks planned for pupils do not challenge them. Staff do not ask questions in enough depth to check that pupils have understood aspects of what they have read.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Prompt and effective referrals are made to external agencies. Leaders challenge the decisions of agencies tenaciously if they consider them not to be appropriate. Governors ensure that rigorous recruitment checks take place before staff and other adults work in school.

The leadership team has established a strong safeguarding culture at the school. Underpinning this is the strong moral ethos of the school. Staff are well trained. Required training is supplemented with informative updates to keep safeguarding at the forefront of the school's work. All staff keep a close eye on pupils and make sure that they take prompt and effective actions when issues arise. Detailed record-keeping ensures that nothing is missed. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are taught how to stay safe in a range of situations. For example, pupils learn about how to safely use the internet and are taught how to stay safe when they are using a range of devices online. Pupils say that bullying is very rare but, if it does occur, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.

Inspection findings

- Teachers' literacy knowledge is good. They show pupils clearly how to construct and plan their writing well and how to edit and improve their work systematically. As a result, pupils understand and develop a secure knowledge of the language and how to use punctuation. Their awareness of audience supports the writing of good-quality pieces of work. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work. Leaders and staff have worked well to improve the progress made by boys and disadvantaged pupils in writing successfully. Teachers plan engaging topics and have placed a strong and successful emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of sentence structure. Staff are adept at helping pupils to pull

together their writing skills to write with flair and with accurate grammar and spelling.

- Staff have developed pupils' reading skills well, including those of disadvantaged pupils and boys. Pupils are able to understand a range of different genres because pupils read widely and often. Teachers introduce pupils skilfully to new words and interesting phrases from different texts and help them to understand precisely how the author has used them. However, there are occasions when tasks linked to what pupils have read do not challenge them. Additionally, when discussing what pupils have read, some questions are too easy. As a result, their progress in reading is not as strong as it could be.
- Strategies to improve pupils' mathematical skills are effective. Teachers set work that is pitched well for pupils of different prior attainment, including for the most able pupils. Your staff check and assess pupils' work accurately to support good learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. Staff adjust work if it is too easy and this ensures that a swift pace to learning is maintained. Staff ensure that misconceptions and errors are cleared up promptly before pupils move on to further work. The mathematics leader gives helpful advice to colleagues on how they can improve their practice and challenge the most able pupils. There is strong evidence in pupils' books to show that pupils can solve complex mathematical problems methodically.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that is dynamic and matches the different needs and interests of each class and year group. Teachers adjust tasks and 'topics' to address gaps in pupils' knowledge or understanding. This flexible approach means that pupils enjoy and benefit from meaningful opportunities to learn across all subjects. The positive impact on pupils' outcomes is strengthened further because tasks ensure that key skills are used and developed simultaneously. As a result, pupils achieve well in a wide range of subjects. Teachers ensure that learning in subjects such as science, history and geography is purposeful, engaging and exciting, within school and beyond. Learning in lessons is enhanced by supportive relationships between staff and pupils.
- Your leadership team and staff have worked effectively to reduce exclusions. There have been no exclusions this current academic year and one fixed-period exclusion in the previous year. This represents a significant decrease on the previous two years. Staff have worked alongside and have been well trained by a range of specialists. This has enabled your team to provide timely and good support to pupils, helping them to manage situations that previously made them anxious. Staff have used outside agency help thoughtfully, including that from the trust and local authority, to support pupils and their families.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan tasks in reading that challenge pupils effectively
- staff use questioning consistently well to develop pupils' understanding about what they have read.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders to discuss the school's effectiveness. I also met with a member of the governing body and three representatives from the multi-academy trust, including the chief executive officer. You joined me on visits to classrooms to observe pupils' learning. A group of pupils met with me and I spoke informally with pupils throughout the school day. I looked at pupils' work across a range of subjects. I spoke with parents at the end of the school day. There were 28 responses from parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments that were taken account of. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' achievement and documents relating to keeping pupils safe.