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Noel Springett-McHugh
Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Springett-McHugh

Short inspection of South End Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 9 November 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 January 2013.

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 a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The actions you, the associate headteacher and other leaders have taken to move the school forward have been successful. You have organised the curriculum into pods, and have developed leaders to manage these curriculum areas. Opportunities for professional development and clear induction for staff new to the school have helped teachers improve their practice and have helped to develop the positive ethos of the school.

Following the last inspection, you were asked to develop pupils' opportunities to find out things for themselves. You and your staff have worked hard to provide your pupils with environments that meet the needs of all your pupils. Areas around the school are planned purposefully to provide effective learning spaces. This includes providing pupils with spaces to read and research in 'the avenue' and the 'R-zone', as well as the quiet spaces for pupils to work away from distractions. Pupils can explore the curriculum through the different 'doors to learning' found in the foyer, allowing them to carry out their own research.

You were also asked to increase the rate of progress pupils make in writing. You and your leaders have developed a system of tracking pupils' progress in writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation. Your pupils complete 'cold' and 'hot' writing

tasks so that you can track the progress they are making. Pupils are given feedback from teachers about how well they are doing, and teachers and teaching assistants provide further support if required. Pupils' workbooks show that pupils present their work neatly and there is a consistent approach to the development of handwriting.

Staff are proud to be part of the school. They work well as a team and support each other. They say that they are also well supported by leaders. This helps them to try new ideas to improve pupils' learning. In every mathematics and English lesson, they make sure that all pupils have direct teaching from a teacher, as well as targeted support from the teaching assistant. Staff feel that leaders take care to listen to what the pupils are telling them about their learning. Leaders use this regular feedback from pupils to develop the curriculum and opportunities for pupils across the school.

Pupils respect the school's values, such as talent, responsibility, pride, democracy and respect. They strive to become a school VIP, and have a golden ticket sent home to celebrate their success. They value the learning environments and understand that leaders have provided them with different spaces to allow them to research and work in a space that suits them. They are particularly proud of 'the den', where they know they can go if they have any worries, and someone will help them. During my visit, pupils were polite and very well mannered. They spoke confidently with visitors and opened doors for others.

You make a wide range of opportunities available for pupils. The 'huddle bus' is available to pupils at break and lunchtime. This provides pupils with a quiet space to read, play with Lego or have some relaxation time. Pupils look after this space well, with the 'huddle ambassadors' making sure that pupils take care of resources and keep the bus tidy.

Parents are very positive about the school. Almost every parent who responded to the online survey, Parent View, or who spoke with me during the inspection believes that the school is well led. They feel that staff listen to them and act upon any concerns they may have. Several parents commented that you and other staff work hard to identify pupils' individual talents and do what you can to nurture these.

The governing body makes a good contribution to the school's leadership. Governors are committed to the school and are passionate about meeting the needs of pupils. They strive for improvement and provide you with challenge on how well the school is doing. Governors have a good knowledge of the attainment and progress of groups of children, such as disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They understand that safeguarding has a high priority and that safeguarding is everyone's business.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that all the necessary checks are in place before an adult starts working or volunteering at the school.

You and the school business manager have a clear understanding of the safer recruitment procedures. Records are well organised, clear and fit for purpose.

You and the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) are diligent in checking referrals and concerns made to you. You use an online system for recording concerns, and this has helped you to keep track of them. You check the progress of referrals to external agencies carefully and the DSL is dogged in following up concerns to ensure the best outcome for the pupil. You and the DSL make sure that pupils who do not meet the local authority thresholds receive support in school.

You have made sure that your staff are fully trained and aware of their duty to safeguard pupils. You have made sure that staff are aware of local issues and have close links with the local police. All staff I spoke with were clear about how to pass on concerns. They are aware of the different types of abuse and the signs to look for.

Inspection findings

- You and your leaders are passionate about providing your pupils with the best possible opportunities. You are clear about your vision and values and these are evident throughout the school. The vibrant and stimulating classrooms, displays and dedicated areas are not just for show. They are designed carefully to provide pupils with learning opportunities that they may not encounter elsewhere, such as the varied settings of the beach, the train carriage or the lounge areas. These are designed to provide pupils with different stimuli to encourage them to read.
- You have structured the curriculum to target the interest of pupils. Pupils are encouraged to challenge themselves and strive to achieve more. Learning tasks follow the same structure across the school, with pupils developing their understanding to be an 'apprentice', 'qualified' or a 'master'. Teachers move pupils between the groups depending on their levels of understanding, and pupils use self-assessment to challenge themselves to move groups when they think they are ready.
- Over the past two years, you have made changes to the way mathematics is taught across the school. You responded well to the raised expectations of the curriculum and completed an analysis of the needs of your pupils and your staff. You carried out an extensive programme of staff training and development to ensure that your teachers and teaching assistants had the necessary skills to deliver the new curriculum. You reviewed the curriculum to discover the gaps in pupils' understanding and used this information to fill these gaps. As a result of this programme of development, your pupils achieved well above the national average in the 2017 Year 6 national tests in mathematics.
- You and your leaders have recognised that pupils were not making as much progress in reading and writing as in mathematics. You have introduced a new approach to reading that challenges pupils to read with greater fluency and comprehension. You have targeted pupils who require additional support and put further interventions in place to support and develop their understanding.

- In writing, teachers use the information from assessments to target pupils' next steps in learning. Teachers identify pupils' learning needs. However, this is not yet as well developed as it is in mathematics. Teachers are not as confident in developing pupils' skills in writing, and fewer pupils challenge themselves to achieve higher standards.
- You and your leaders have identified that disadvantaged pupils do not do as well as other pupils. You have restructured the school day to allow disadvantaged pupils to stay for booster sessions after school. However, this additional support is not yet impacting on the progress and attainment of these pupils. You also ensure that every disadvantaged pupil receives mentoring six times a year. This has helped you to further identify any additional support that pupils may need, and to discuss aspirations they have for their future.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. In lessons, pupils demonstrate resilience and determination, particularly in mathematics. Pupils say that there are very few incidents of bullying and, if there were a problem, it would be resolved very quickly. Pupils understand the 'zip it, block it, flag it' approach to keeping themselves safe online. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and to whom they can talk if they have a problem. Nurture support is in place for pupils who require extra support, including bereavement, developing self-esteem or family support.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all teachers maintain a strong focus on the development of skills in writing so that pupils challenge themselves to achieve more
- continue to redress the imbalance between the progress of disadvantaged and other pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the associate headteacher and the assistant headteacher. I met with the chair and three members of the governing body. I spoke with teachers,

including the pod drivers, the lead practitioner and the school bursar. Six pupils gave me a tour of the school. I observed learning taking place during the morning.

I scrutinised a selection of pupils' workbooks. I examined a range of the school's documentation, including its self-evaluation document, its improvement plan and documents relating to safeguarding. I considered the views of parents by speaking with some of them before school. I also analysed the 73 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.