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6 October 2017

Mrs R Waite
Headteacher
Montbelle Primary School
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Dear Mrs Waite

Short inspection of Montbelle Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Since taking up your post, you quickly established a new vision for the building and particularly the outdoor environment for children in the early years. The hard work of you and your leadership team has ensured that the school has continued to improve and that pupils learn and achieve well.

You have worked very well with senior and middle leaders, including the governors, to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The governing body has recently restructured and this is proving to be successful in supporting your efforts to drive improvements. Governors are clear about their roles and responsibilities and bring the necessary expertise to challenge and support you effectively. However, governors recognise they need to ask more challenging questions about pupils' outcomes, including their attendance, than they have done in the past.

You and your senior leaders are driven and determined to ensure that every pupil in the school achieves well. You hold leaders and teachers to account through your rigorous monitoring schedule; this ensures that their actions focus on improving pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching. Equally, you provide teachers with clear guidance and support to help them develop their skills. For example, you have worked closely with staff to develop the teaching and learning rubric used in your school that is linked carefully to the teachers' standards.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Senior leaders and governors fulfil statutory duties well to ensure that pupils are safe from harm and danger. You ensure that training is up to date and staff are familiar with the most recent statutory guidance. Staff know and understand their responsibilities and carry them out extremely well.

Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding liaise closely with families and other external agencies where pupils are potentially at risk of harm.

Parents, carers and pupils are assured that the school is a safe place. Pupils know the staff they can turn to if they are worried or anxious. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep safe when out of school because the curriculum covers a range of age-appropriate topics. The systems that you have for checking staff before appointing them are thorough and robust.

Inspection findings

- To verify if the school remains good, my first line of enquiry focused on leaders' actions to improve pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence of pupils. I focused on the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In 2016, the persistent absence rates for these pupils were high when compared to the national average.
- Your plans for improvement demonstrate that leaders and staff have made improving pupils' attendance a high priority over the last three years. Staff know individual pupils well and monitor their attendance carefully. As a result, staff know the reasons for a pupil's absence and identify concerns promptly. The school's 'fast-track' approach ensures that pupils who are not attending school as regularly as they should receive the right level of support. You and your team work sensitively with families to understand their individual circumstances, for example where a pupil has particular medical needs that affect their attendance. This ensures that staff adapt the support and challenge they provide to reflect the situation of each pupil. In addition, the governors have invested in additional support from the local authority's education welfare service to strengthen your efforts to improve attendance. You make effective use of this service to build partnerships with families and, where necessary, take appropriate action to reinforce your high expectations for attendance.
- I found that leaders' actions to reduce absence and persistent absence for all groups of pupils are proving successful. In addition, you and your team are quick to put in place additional support for pupils who have been persistently absent so they do not fall behind in their learning. However, governors do not routinely challenge leaders about the impact of their work to improve attendance or monitor the attendance of different groups with sufficient rigour. You are clear that governors' oversight of pupils' attendance needs strengthening. The second line of enquiry considered leaders' actions to improve the outcomes of the most able pupils in mathematics. This was because in the 2016 key stage 2 assessments, too few pupils achieved the high standard when compared to others nationally. The school has a clear approach to the teaching of mathematics which ensures that there is consistency in all mathematics lessons. In particular, pupils deepen their

understanding by using their mathematics in other curriculum subjects. This was particularly evident in the work I saw around the school which demonstrated how pupils confidently applied their skills and knowledge to solve problems in subjects such as music, where pupils used notation to solve fractions.

- Mathematics is taught well in the school. The consistent approach to mathematics teaching has paid dividends. In the lessons I visited, teachers and support staff demonstrated secure subject knowledge and explained mathematical concepts clearly. As a result, pupils are able to evidence and share their reasoning, problem-solving skills and have fluency in the way they respond to the range of questions in lessons. However, the provision for pupils who are working at a higher standard is still not evident and embedded enough to ensure that this specific group of pupils are making good or better progress in lessons.
- The third line of enquiry considered pupils' progress in reading in key stage 2. This was because in the 2016 key stage 2 assessments, I noted that girls performed better than boys in reading. Our discussions took into consideration the outcomes from the most recent 2017 Year 6 results. You have modified the approach to teaching reading by developing a focused 'guided reading' approach. Furthermore, you have a robust action plan to diminish the differences between cohorts and groups of pupils in the school. Cultural enrichment projects are well planned to support pupils' real-life experiences so they can make links when they read.
- With leaders, you have identified the need to embed reading opportunities within the wider curriculum. You have already started this through, for example, 'Take One...' topics. You have also provided pupils with opportunities to visit a range of venues to promote reading. For example, all pupils from Year 1 through to Year 6 visited the theatre to watch a performance linked to a shared text. Your assessment information suggests pupils are on track to achieve better outcomes in reading.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils who are working at the higher standard in mathematics have opportunities in lessons to use and apply their advanced mathematics knowledge through carefully planned provision
- governors use assessment and other information that is available to monitor more rigorously the outcomes and attendance for specific groups of 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 Greenwich. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lando Du Plooy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held a number of meetings with you and other senior leaders. Your senior leader accompanied me on a series of short visits to lessons. I held a group discussion with two middle leaders and the deputy headteacher with responsibilities for reading in the school. I also held a meeting with you and the attendance liaison officer. I met with representatives of the governing body, including your chair of governors. In addition, I had a meeting with the director of learning from the local authority responsible for managing improvement partners for the school. Informal conversations took place with a few parents attending the Year 5 parent assembly. I spoke to pupils in lessons, scrutinised their books with senior leaders and met with members of the pupil governing body. I looked at a range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation and summary improvement plans, external reviews of the school's work, minutes of governors' meetings, records of pupils' attainment, progress and behaviour, evidence of records to keep pupils safe, and their attendance. I took into consideration 77 responses to Parent View.