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Mrs Lesley Spicer
Headteacher
Peel Common Infant School and Nursery Unit
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Dear Mrs Spicer

Short inspection of Peel Common Infant School and Nursery Unit

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 2018, 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Peel Common Infants is an inclusive and happy school. You have created a culture which enables pupils to be individuals and where everyone can 'discover and grow together in a place to be me'. With effective support from the governors, and high enthusiasm and commitment from all staff, the vast majority of pupils make good progress. Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and what could be even better. Governors are very supportive of the school. They challenge school leaders regularly to ensure the best possible provision for pupils. Staff respect your thoughtful and respectful leadership. All staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire said that they are proud to work at Peel Common Infants. Parents and carers are also supportive of the school, valuing how happy their children are. As one parent told me, 'My son comes out smiling every day.'

Pupils enjoy their school and the many things it has to offer. They told me they particularly enjoy listening to stories and playing on the trim trail. They also love going on educational visits, especially a recent trip to Marwell Zoo.

The previous inspection report highlighted a well-led school with good standards and effective staff training. You have maintained these strengths. Leaders have embedded a research-based approach to improving practice. Strategies to improve teaching and learning are investigated and evaluated, with leaders valuing the open and professional dialogue this brings. You know, however, that there is work to be

done to ensure that outcomes by the end of early years are stronger, so that pupils are well prepared for Year 1.

At the last inspection leaders were asked to raise the standards in mathematics and ensure the better use of assessment data. The unvalidated performance information for the end of key stage 1 in 2018 indicates that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected and the higher standard in mathematics is above the national average. Standards have also risen in the phonics screening check, with the proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the expected standard in 2018 above the national figure. Assessment information in key stage 1 is used effectively to ensure that any gaps in pupils' learning are swiftly addressed.

School development planning is focused sharply on improving the attainment of boys, including in writing. Provisional performance information for the end of key stage 1 in 2018 indicates that boys' attainment at the expected standard in writing is higher than the national picture for boys. However, leaders and governors are aware that the gap in attainment between boys and girls in writing is too wide in current cohorts.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding requirements are fit for purpose. Day-to-day routines are secure. Staff are quick to report their concerns if they are worried about a pupil. Records are detailed. Any necessary actions are completed without delay. Staff are relentless in ensuring that the right help is made available to vulnerable pupils and their families. Service children, who have a parent working in the armed forces, are very well supported at the school. Pre-employment checks to ensure the suitability of all adults who work at or volunteer in the school are fully in place. Safeguarding training is regular.

Attendance is in line with the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who are frequently absent has risen recently. Leaders acknowledge that there is still work to do to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school, stating that teachers, 'care if we are hurt'. They say that pupils are well behaved at Peel Common Infants and could clearly explain the school rules. Parents also appreciate the caring nature of the school. As one parent commented, 'I know my son is safe and well-looked-after.'

Pupils have a good understanding of e-safety, which is an integral part of the school's curriculum. For example, a Reception-aged child confidently told me what to do if he saw a video online that worried him, 'Tell a grown-up and turn it off.'

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed that we would focus on: how well leaders have ensured that standards in mathematics have risen since the last inspection; the effectiveness of the wider curriculum on pupils' learning,

particularly, but not solely, for boys; and how effectively writing is taught in the school.

- Leaders have put into place strategies to help pupils improve their fluency, and to reason and solve problems mathematically. For example, teachers plan lessons within the context of real life, to help pupils apply their mathematical skills to a wide range of situations. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, I observed pupils learning about subtraction by counting people getting off a bus. As a result, pupils could explain clearly to me what subtraction actually meant. Pupils display a strong understanding of number and place value, appropriate to their age. They use jottings and pictures effectively to work out and prove mathematical problems, and practical apparatus to support their learning. As a result, pupils make good progress in mathematics at Peel Common Infants.
- The key stage 1 curriculum is carefully designed to provide pupils with meaningful learning opportunities and experiences. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is driven by the skills the pupils need to learn, whilst tapping into the pupils' own interests. Texts and themes are carefully selected to interest both genders. As a result, pupils in key stage 1 enjoy their learning. They are challenged well and produce work they are proud of in a wide range of subjects. The early years curriculum, however, is less well developed. There are too few opportunities for children to practise their early reading, writing and mathematics skills in their independent learning. Activities often lack sufficient challenge to stretch the most able children. Leaders should, as a key priority, ensure that tasks are carefully designed to help children take the next steps in their learning.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to write at length, with a clear purpose. Carefully chosen texts support pupils to develop their vocabulary and construct sentences. As a result, these aspects of writing are a strength. Strong and knowledgeable middle leaders support and challenge teachers well. The English lead regularly checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. However, current assessment information shows that the attainment of pupils in writing is not as strong as it is in reading and mathematics. In addition, despite some improvement, boys' attainment in writing is much lower than that of girls.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the number of pupils who are regularly absent reduces
- teaching in the early years systematically builds children's knowledge, understanding and skills so that more children reach and exceed the standards expected of their age
- progress and attainment in writing improves, particularly, but not solely, for boys.

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

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss the school's effectiveness. Together, we visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning, talk to pupils and look at their work. We looked at the quality of work in pupils' books. I considered 30 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text comments. I also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. Responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires were considered and I had a meeting with a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school.

I met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority. In addition, I met with the middle leader responsible for English. I held a telephone conversation with the designated officer for safeguarding from the local authority and evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of documents was examined, including: the school's self-evaluation; school improvement planning; attendance information; information about pupils' progress; and various policies. I also examined the school's website.