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Miss Jenny Slinger
Acting Principal
Knighton Fields Primary Academy
Knighton Fields Road West
Leicester
Leicestershire
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Dear Miss Slinger

Short inspection of Knighton Fields Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 2 May 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in February 2016.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Knighton Fields Primary Academy became a member of the Mead Educational Trust in June 2016 and, in January 2019, you became the acting principal of the school.

The school is bright and welcoming. Pupils state how much they love coming to school because they can use the 'character muscles' approach to help them learn. Pupils are extremely proud of their school and their attitudes towards learning are positive. They are polite and courteous and work well with one another, sharing resources and listening to others' ideas.

Pupils told me that incidents of inappropriate behaviour are very rare but, if they do happen, they are dealt with immediately and very well. Pupils throughout the school behave well and are courteous and polite to one another and to adults. Pupils speak respectfully about helping each other and told me how they recently raised funds to support a family in the school. Pupils were encouraged to wear blue for the day and sold cakes in school.

Pupils take part in a wide range of curriculum activities, some of which are held after school. Pupils speak enthusiastically about going on a visit to the Space Centre and how this experience helped them to improve their writing.

Members of the primary leadership team were keen to tell me about the behaviours for learning in school, which include being resilient, resourceful, responsible, ready and reflective, and how these values help pupils to learn in school. Pupils were keen to tell me about the behaviour and attendance rewards and how they enjoy receiving medals and rewards for coming to school every day. Older pupils support and cooperate well with the younger pupils in school, as seen in the breakfast club, where the pupils can enjoy a calm and healthy start to the day.

Parents and carers are supportive of the school and speak positively about the communication between home and school and how their children enjoy the 'snack shack' each morning.

As acting principal, you are well supported by the substantive principal and the academy trust. You and your leadership team have a detailed and accurate view of the school. You are developing your staff team effectively through appropriate professional development opportunities with the trust and the local authority. This has ensured a more consistent approach to teaching and learning across the school and has increased accountability.

Together, you have identified the key priorities for improvement and have ensured that staff have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons and over time. Senior leaders and subject leaders meet regularly to check pupils' progress and quickly provide actions to support those pupils who need to catch up with their peers.

The academy councillors have a clear understanding of the school's priorities and how these are being met through the school improvement plan. They have a good understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to do to be even better. They make regular visits to the school to check on the school's work towards meeting its priorities and they understand the importance of holding leaders to account.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are now kept using an online system and are detailed and of a high quality. Leaders and the chair of the academy council place high importance on safeguarding. Staff see safeguarding as everyone's responsibility. It is a standard agenda item for all meetings. The 'removing barriers to learning' team, which includes the designated leaders for safeguarding, meets each week, which ensures effective communication.

You provide all staff with relevant and regular training so that they know what to do if they have any concerns. There is a clear and thorough induction process in place for all new staff. The chair of the academy council has a good understanding of safeguarding issues, and the local authority recently conducted a safeguarding review of the school. External agencies are appropriately involved in safeguarding issues where necessary.

Pupils receive good guidance on how to keep safe. This includes advice about staying safe in the school grounds and regular information about staying safe online. Visitors, such as the police and the local fire service, support the work of the school. Pupils I met with said that bullying is not a problem in their school and that any issues are dealt with swiftly. Pupils told me they feel safe in school and know who to go to if they have a problem. A large majority of parents who responded to the survey said that their children are being kept safe in school.

Inspection findings

- Over the last three years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the time they reach the end of the Reception Year has been below what is expected nationally.
- You, the substantive principal and your senior leaders have rightly identified in the school improvement plan that outcomes need to improve at the end of the early years. An increasing proportion of children enter the Nursery and the Reception Year with levels of skills in reading, writing and number that are below those typically found nationally. You have also identified that you have an increasing proportion of children arriving in school who speak English as an additional language. You have increased the consistency of teaching through targeted provision, and the deployment of staff has been carefully considered. You are tracking the children's progress rigorously. Monitoring of children's progress ensures early identification of those needing additional support to catch up with their peers.
- You and your senior leadership team are working closely with parents to suggest ways they could support their children at home. Recent initiatives, such as 'tricky word challenges' and providing parents with reading strategies, are ensuring that children can work with their parents at home. You and your early years leader are aware that there needs to be a continued focus on questioning when children are working independently on tasks so that more children acquire the skills and knowledge to achieve a good level of development in line with their peers.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 has been below what is expected nationally for the last three years. You are aware of this and have put in a range of strategies, including a specific programme of work to accelerate the progress of pupils in Year 2. You and your staff take part in regular checks on the progress of pupils' writing, both within school and with colleagues from the trust. These checks ensure that pupils are tracked from their starting points and teaching is adapted for any child who may be falling behind. Most-able pupils are challenged through the 'Mr Stretch' activities and this ensures that pupils are keen to achieve the highest standards possible.
- A consistent approach to the teaching of phonics has ensured that pupils are able to use their skills when writing. Pupils have more stamina for writing at length and this is reflected in the work in their books.

- A new mathematics scheme has been introduced to ensure consistency of planning and delivery of teaching. The books I sampled showed that pupils are given challenging tasks so that they can achieve the higher standards.
- Although pupil's attainment in reading and writing increased at the end of key stage 2 in 2018, it was below what is expected nationally for the previous two years. You and your senior leaders have worked hard to implement a range of whole-school initiatives, including 'hooked on books' and a book-led curriculum that is now impacting on improved standards of reading and writing across school. Pupils have a purpose for writing, for example, pupils in one class I visited were writing a TripAdvisor review following their visit to the space centre. Pupils speak confidently about the writing toolkit that supports them to improve their writing.
- An analysis of the school's current assessment information indicates that standards in reading and writing are expected to rise in 2019. You are aware of the need to extend reading and writing opportunities into other areas of the curriculum to maintain these standards.
- A rigorous and effective approach has been adopted by you and your attendance lead in addressing the high level of persistent absence in school. There is a whole-school commitment to improving rates of attendance and this is outlined in your school improvement plan. Attendance is now in line with other schools nationally. Rates of persistent absenteeism are reducing fast due to the rigorous and sensitive way that the attendance lead works with the families in school. Reward systems are in place that have motivated pupils to come to school each day, and pupils enjoy earning the gold medals.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they build on the improvements made in the early years so that a greater proportion of children consistently achieve a good level of development
- they improve standards in reading and writing by embedding recent initiatives and providing pupils with opportunities to draw on experiences in other areas of the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Karen Slack
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the substantive principal and members of your senior leadership team, and shared my lines of enquiry. I also met with the chair of the academy council and the early years and English leaders. I met with members of staff and the school business manager. We jointly observed teaching and learning in classes and I examined samples of pupils' work. I listened to a sample of pupils read. I met with the primary leadership team to discuss behaviour and safeguarding in school, and spoke informally with pupils in breakfast club and in classes. I analysed documents, including plans for the school's improvement, published data and reports showing the school's view of its own performance. I spoke to the chair of the academy council and the director of education for Mead Educational Trust. I evaluated the school's website. Safeguarding documents, policies and records relating to behaviour and attendance were inspected. I took account of the 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 14 free-text comments. I also spoke to parents at the beginning of the day.