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2 July 2019

Miss Amanda Westaway
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Westaway

Short inspection of Kings Furlong Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 18 June 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 December 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 joined as headteacher in January 2018 and, since then, you have led with determination to improve further the quality of teaching in the school. Together with your assistant headteachers, you have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, carefully checking on the progress pupils make.

You are highly ambitious to remove the barriers to learning that exist for the most vulnerable pupils in your school. Kings Furlong Juniors is a very inclusive and caring school, as summed up by a Year 6 pupil who said, 'everyone is important in our school'. Adults know their pupils and their families well. Strong relationships ensure that there is high level of mutual respect. Staff morale is high. All staff who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire said they are proud to work at the school.

Pupils are happy at Kings Furlong Juniors. They said that their teachers make learning fun and that adults are 'always positive'. Pupils spoke passionately about how they are encouraged to observe the school's learning behaviours, such as teamwork and risk-taking, in lessons. They were clear on how these skills help them become better learners. They especially love spotting these behaviours in others and nominating them for a special award. Parents are equally happy with the school. As one parent wrote, summing up the views of many, 'Kings Furlong Juniors is a safe and happy environment where my child is thriving.'

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to ensure that teachers provide work that challenges the most able pupils. You have been successful in this in English and mathematics. Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils who have attained the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics is higher than the national picture.

The previous inspection also noted that there was a need to provide training for middle leaders so that they can support other teachers to improve their work. You have developed the role of year-group leaders well. They make regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning, providing useful advice and feedback to teachers, and supporting their colleagues to adapt provision where needed.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of high quality. Referrals are made swiftly when necessary. Practical and emotional support for pupils who are young carers is especially effective. Staff are vigilant in following up any welfare concerns they may have about a child. Communication is strong. Leaders have established effective relationships with external agencies. Pre-employment checks to ensure the suitability of all adults who work and volunteer in the school are fully in place. Safeguarding training is regular and effective. This has resulted in a staff team that is very clear on its part in keeping pupils safe.

Most pupils attend school regularly. Nevertheless, absence figures for disadvantaged pupils remain higher than for others. Attendance for this group of pupils is improving, due to effective strategies and support and strong relationships with parents. However, there is scope to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils further. The proportion of pupils who have received fixed-term exclusions in the past has been above that typically found in primary schools. The rate of exclusions is now dropping due to improved understanding of the needs and triggers of vulnerable pupils. Leaders use a range of strategies to ensure that exclusions are only used as a last resort.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and that there is an adult they can go to if they feel worried. They are especially complimentary about the staff who look after them at lunchtimes, stating that, 'they sort out our problems happily'. They told me that bullying occasionally happens but that staff are good in making sure they 'find solutions' to it. Pupils show a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. They are very knowledgeable about the effects of cyber bullying and know precisely what to do were this to happen to them.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed that the focus would be on: the progress pupils make in reading, with a focus on boys; how effectively leaders ensure strong outcomes for disadvantaged pupils; and how well teaching meets the needs of the most able pupils, including in the wider curriculum.

- At the end of key stage 2 in 2018, a lower proportion of boys than seen nationally reached the expected standard in reading. Leaders have responded swiftly to this. Leaders have ensured that reading skills are mapped out progressively so that pupils can build on what they have learned. Pupils apply their new reading skills to a wide range of texts and genres well. My classroom visits, including the scrutiny of pupils' work, showed that pupils, including boys, are making good progress in their comprehension skills.
- Teachers ensure that pupils think deeply about their reading. The introduction of book clubs in Year 5 and Year 6, where pupils discuss their thoughts on a book, has been especially effective in increasing pupils' stamina and speed in reading. However, speaking to pupils about their reading habits revealed that the books that they read at home are not carefully matched to their attainment. Books are often too easy, and pupils, especially boys, are not selective in their choice of reading material. As a result, pupils do not have a deep love of and excitement for reading.
- Staff are clear about the barriers that have slowed the learning of disadvantaged pupils in the past. For example, pupils in the current Year 3 joined the school with attainment typically well below that which is seen nationally, especially in writing. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils who are falling behind are identified swiftly and that support is put in place to enable them to catch up. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson teaching ensured that pupils who had not yet understood number bonds were given opportunities to consolidate and practise this knowledge. As a result, some disadvantaged pupils are making good progress, especially in upper key stage 2.
- However, the pupil premium strategy does not detail precisely how the success of each initiative will be measured. This means that leaders do not know precisely which intervention gives the most rapid gains in progress. Leaders and governors are determined to raise standards for this group of pupils.
- More pupils across the school are attaining the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics because of the high expectations teachers have for them in these subjects. High-quality assessment ensures that teachers swiftly move pupils on in their learning. Teachers' strong subject knowledge enables them to question pupils' understanding well and deepen their thinking. However, scrutiny of work in subjects from the wider curriculum, such as history, geography and science, showed that work in developing pupils' subject-specific skills and knowledge sometimes lacks challenge for the most able pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- introduce pupils to a wider range of book choices to instil in them a love of reading and challenge them further

- strengthen the provision for disadvantaged pupils, especially in the current Year 3, so that they make stronger progress and attend school more regularly
- develop the curriculum further so that the most able pupils are challenged to improve their skills across all subjects.

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 two assistant headteachers to discuss the school's effectiveness. We visited classrooms to observe pupils learning, talk to them and look at their work. We looked at the quality of work in a range of pupils' books. I considered 54 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including the free-text comments. I also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. I took account of 25 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 155 responses to the pupil survey. I also had a meeting with a group of pupils to gather their views of the school.

I met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I met with four middle leaders. I evaluated the school's safeguarding procedures. A wide range of documents was examined, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning; information about pupils' progress; the pupil premium strategy; and various policies. I also examined the school's website.