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Mrs Emma Jefferies
Headteacher
Stockbridge Primary School
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Dear Mrs Jefferies

Short inspection of Stockbridge Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 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 September 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 and your deputy headteacher have built successfully and sustainably on the previously emerging strengths of the school, during a period of notable change. The school now has twice as many pupils as it had during the last inspection. This increase includes those attending the pre-school that used to be a separate organisation but is now part of the school. This rapid expansion reflects parents' and carers' confidence in the quality of provision and care at Stockbridge, which they reflected in their positive comments at the start of the day, and through their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. One parent summed this up when they said: 'Stockbridge Primary School is a fantastic school with a lovely school community. My children are happy, confident and progressing well academically.'

Your staff work with a common sense of purpose to address appropriate priorities for ongoing school improvement. Leaders and governors know that, in the past, progress across key stage 2, particularly in writing and mathematics, was not as secure as it was in reading, where pupils achieved particularly well. Although pupils were securely reaching the expected standard for their age, too few moved on to attain the higher standard of learning they were capable of. Pupils' rates of progress are now accelerating across key stage 2, but you recognise there is further work to do to ensure that the most able pupils consistently achieve the higher standard of learning they are capable of throughout their time at your school.

Pupils enjoy being part of your school community. They care for and support each other, and are polite and respectful towards the adults around them. This was evident during my visit, when pupils celebrated each other's skills enthusiastically during a talent show in assembly. Pupils expect to work hard in lessons and want to be successful. They respond well to structured support that helps them to make increasingly effective use of the time they have in lessons. You continue your work to develop their independence and self-motivation as learners so that an increasing number of them will routinely strive to achieve as well as they can.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff and governors make every effort to help keep pupils safe. The culture of caring is evident throughout the school and is valued by pupils and their parents. Leaders ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose, and use helpful training to support staff in fulfilling their duties. Consequently, adults understand clearly what they must do if they are worried about a pupil's welfare, and act promptly when they need to. Recently introduced and useful changes to how information is recorded help leaders to keep a close eye on emerging patterns of concern. As a result, you and your senior colleagues are able to put effective support in place quickly for potentially vulnerable pupils and families, working with external expertise when needed.

Pupils come to school regularly. They describe feeling safe in school because everyone looks out for each other. This has helped the notable number of pupils who recently joined the school mid-year or mid-key stage to settle quickly and feel included. Parents recognise the nurturing environment as a key strength of the school. They note how, since the pre-school has become part of the main school, it has helped children to make the transition into the Reception Year even more smoothly than in the past. Pupils throughout the school demonstrate a mature understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. They know why it is important to tell a trusted adult about anything that makes them feel unsafe or if they are worried about a friend, so that someone can help them.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we focused on: how well teaching is challenging pupils to reach high standards in writing and mathematics; whether current pupils make consistently strong progress from their starting points; and how effectively leaders ensure that the newly integrated pre-school provision prepares children as well as possible for key stage 1. I also checked the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.
- Your investment in effective staff training is helping you to develop the quality of teaching across the school, as you 'grow your own' skilled workforce. Teachers work together well to plan lesson activities that build securely on pupils' prior learning, and help them to think deeply. Staff are driven by their collective understanding of the need to ensure that the most able pupils are routinely challenged to make strong progress, particularly in writing and mathematics.

- Pupils have an age-appropriate awareness of how to write well and with accurate grammar. The well-established and high-quality approach to teaching reading across the school provides pupils with vibrant vocabulary and ideas that stimulate their writing. Over time, pupils write with increasingly sophisticated punctuation and expression. Their sustained approach to writing at length and careful handwriting are evident in their wider topic work.
- In mathematics, pupils use a range of resources to help them visualise the problems they are working on. This encourages them to persevere when they work on problems independently. Their work shows how they are increasingly able to explain their thinking and apply their prior knowledge in a different context, particularly in the upper school. Sometimes, lower down the school, overly structured work can restrict the pace of learning for those who are ready to move on and deepen their understanding.
- Leaders have thought carefully about how pupils' progress is tracked over time. You have not been afraid to adapt systems that were not supporting teachers well enough to identify what pupils needed to learn next steps. Staff now have a wealth of information that enables them to plan specifically for pupils' needs, and to be held account for the progress pupils are making. Governors challenge leaders where pupils' outcomes reflect less secure progress from their starting points. Systems are currently evolving to make it easier for leaders and governors to look more strategically at patterns in progress information over time.
- Pupils typically achieve well, particularly in reading. In 2017, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard at the end of early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 were at least in line with national averages. This shows notable improvement across the school over time, especially by the end of Year 6, after outcomes in 2016 were, as you rightly described them, disappointing. Accelerating rates of progress mean that more pupils now achieve a greater depth of learning in reading, writing and mathematics than was the case in the past. Currently, progress and attainment are very strong in Year 6, but less so in Years 1 and 5.
- Leaders have embraced the opportunities presented by integrating the pre-school into the main school, to support wider school improvement. They have adapted how the physical space, both inside and outside, is used to promote children's learning effectively. Staff in the pre-school and the Reception Year work closely together, to enhance their shared understanding of how children's physical and social skills develop over time. The learning they plan carefully meets children's learning needs and stimulates their interests. Consequently, children at the pre-school play well together and are prepared well for more formal learning in the future.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- current improvements to rates of progress in writing and mathematics, particularly across key stage 2, lead to increasing proportions of pupils achieving a greater depth of learning in these areas

- the learning culture evident across the school enables the most able pupils to take even more responsibility for their next steps in learning, and work with determination to achieve the highest possible standards.

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

Kathryn Moles
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I reviewed a wide range of school documents, including your self-evaluation and development plan, policies and information on your website, and information about pupils' attendance, behaviour and academic performance. Together with you and your deputy headteacher, I reviewed a sample of work from pupils in Years 2 and 4, as well as looking at pupils' books during our visits to lessons across the school. I checked the school's safeguarding arrangements, including your central record of recruitment checks. I considered 23 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire, including 21 'free-text' comments, and 17 responses to the staff survey. I met formally with groups of pupils, staff and governors, and spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I spoke informally to parents in the playground at the start of the school day and to pupils over the course of my visit.