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Mrs Jayne Broach
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Broach

Short inspection of Alton Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 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 February 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, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, have sustained and built on many of the strengths that were identified at the previous inspection. Pupils, parents, staff and governors appreciate being part of a school community which has children at the heart of all they do. One parent commented, 'Alton Infant school is an amazing place. The support and care from a team of dedicated staff means such a lot, not just for the child attending, but the family too.'

There is a strong focus on learning behaviours and attitudes, which is embedded well within school life. In lessons, group time and assemblies, pupils reflect on how they can be more successful in their learning. As a result, pupils often demonstrate thinking, skills and knowledge that is beyond their years. For example, some pupils joining the school with English as an additional language quickly gain fluency and confidence when reading aloud, demonstrating reading skills which are more typical of older children.

Pupils' behaviour is a particular strength of the school. Pupils move around the classes and school calmly and sensibly, even when unsupervised. On the day of the inspection, when group time ended, and all pupils returned to their classes from different locations in the school, they did so quietly and with purpose. As a result, a complex transition was completed quickly and pupils were ready to start work within minutes. Pupils play and work together very well. They support each other and

cooperate well, sharing resources and helping one another. This reflects the high expectations embedded within the school.

The curriculum is planned well. Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils learn about and experience a wide range of subjects. Visits and visitors to the school support pupils' learning well. Work in pupils' books shows that subjects such as science, design and technology and history are taught regularly. However, on occasions, pupils' work in these subjects does not reflect the progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics.

The majority of pupils at Alton Infant School do well or very well, with outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics being in line with or above the national average. Leaders carefully check the attainment of all pupils. Some vulnerable groups do not do as well as other pupils, for example disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs. Leaders know that this is the case and take action, but there is more to do, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. The percentage of pupils who reach the higher standards is above that of other schools nationally, reflecting that some pupils make more progress than is typically the case. However, leaders are not yet using what they know about the progress of pupils to drive further improvement work accurately.

At the last inspection, you were asked to improve teaching by providing more challenge for the most able pupils, ensuring that teachers adapt lessons and activities more swiftly and encouraging teachers to utilise opportunities to learn from each other.

The actions you have taken are effective and have resulted in the necessary improvements being made. The most able pupils are routinely challenged because responsive teaching meets pupils' needs very well. Teachers use their time in lessons very well to check pupils' understanding and move them on when ready. Teachers respond positively to coaching and feedback. As a result, teaching is consistently strong across the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding processes are well established. All appropriate checks on staff are carried out and recorded carefully. Staff know the safeguarding policy and can explain what they should do in a range of situations. Staff record concerns, providing detailed and relevant information, which is followed up very well by designated safeguarding staff, who speak to parents and outside agencies whenever necessary. Governors check that school staff and leaders do what they should to keep children safe.

Pupils learn to keep themselves safe. They learn about road and fire safety, and know not to speak to strangers, either virtually or face-to-face. Leaders check attendance and contact parents of pupils whose absence figures are higher than other children. As a consequence, slight variances in attendance have been resolved and attendance of all groups of pupils is at least in line with the national average.

Inspection findings

- In order to evaluate the school's effectiveness, we selected some key areas to explore in detail. These included: how much progress pupils make in the early years; how leaders ensure that vulnerable groups make as much progress as they can; and to what extent the curriculum meets the needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- In the early years, the percentage of pupils who achieve a good level of development is lower than other schools across the country. Leaders provide robust evidence to show that some children join the school with skills and knowledge below their chronological age. Effective leadership in the early years has ensured that high-quality teaching, carefully planned activities and a strong focus on children's next steps enable many children to make good progress. As a result, by the end of their first year in school, approximately two thirds of the pupils demonstrate typical skills and knowledge for their age.
- Leaders carefully check how well pupils are doing during the year and intervene swiftly when pupils are not doing as well as they should. However, leaders currently do not check progress over time. Although a number of pupils make very good progress, leaders and teachers do not monitor this and use the information to drive further improvements.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not do as well as other pupils. Leaders have planned and implemented a range of strategies, such as increasing the individual support that these pupils receive, paying for school visits and providing before- and after-school care. However, there is more to do to ensure that these pupils catch up.
- Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in class. The carefully planned and targeted activities, which are overseen by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), ensure that teaching assistants and teachers meet the needs of these pupils very well.
- Leaders and teachers constantly refine and adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of each cohort. The curriculum is broad and well developed to provide a wide range of interesting and motivating activities for pupils. Teachers are very responsive to the individual needs of pupils and groups, adjusting the curriculum swiftly. For example, children experience going to the beach, visiting the library and selecting and buying books in a book shop. These opportunities meet the needs of groups and individuals very well.
- Although teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is consistently strong across the school, teaching of other subjects across the curriculum is variable in different classes. All teachers plan and deliver the agreed topics and learning objectives but, occasionally, learning lacks the depth that pupils enjoy in the core subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils make accelerated progress so that they achieve as well as other pupils nationally
- progress information is made more accessible so that teachers, leaders and governors can see where accelerated progress is and is not being made
- the quality of teaching across the school is as strong in the foundation subjects as it is in the core 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

Louise Adams
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the SENCo, teachers, governors and a group of pupils. I also spoke to a representative from the local authority. With the headteacher and deputy headteacher, I visited all classes and looked at pupils' work in books. I reviewed the school's information about pupils' attainment. I also reviewed other documentation linked to safeguarding, governance and school improvement. I spoke to parents in the playground at the beginning of the school day and took account of the 48 responses to Parent View. I also took account of the 20 staff responses to the online questionnaire.