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3 March 2017

Mrs Hilary Ballantine
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ballantine

Short inspection of George Spicer Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 February 2017 with Raphael Moss, Ofsted Inspector, 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 June 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You detailed significant changes since the previous inspection. The school has expanded rapidly from a two- to four-form entry school, resulting in twice as many pupils on roll. The school population continues to evolve and grow, and includes pupils from a myriad of different ethnic backgrounds. Some pupils join the school with very little or no English. The early years foundation stage and key stage 1 are now located in a purpose-built unit on a different site. You, together with other leaders including governors, have successfully managed these additional demands.

You have focused on improving the quality of teaching and developing the role of governors. These were the areas identified at the last inspection. You told me that the last two years have been immensely exciting and challenging, in equal measures. It is a credit to you, your leaders and governors, that you have created a cohesive and strong team who share your high aspirations for all pupils. All staff feel exceptionally well supported by leaders. They told inspectors that they are proud to be part of a large team. The school's core values of respect, responsibility and perseverance, together with the diverse cultural heritage of pupils, fosters tolerance and harmonious relationships.

From our discussions and your evaluation of the school's performance, you know exactly what needs to be worked on and what needs to be achieved to meet these priorities. You know that consistency in all aspects of the school's performance across both key stages and sites is crucial to equality of opportunity for all. You

have restructured the leadership team, so that there is an equal balance of senior and middle leaders for each key stage. Curriculum teams also work across both key stages, sharing their knowledge and expertise with colleagues. Each year group has a leader for learning. The leaders for learning are the key drivers for raising the quality of teaching and pupil achievement. They have been pivotal in making sure that the high proportion of new staff, including teachers new to the profession, are well supported and provided with tailored training, guidance and advice. As a result, teaching is good and improving.

The governing body is smaller, but much more effective. Focused governor groups scrutinise in great detail all aspects of the school's performance. They have audited members' skills and recruited new governors wisely so that they have plugged any skills gaps. Consequently, they are able to challenge you and your leaders effectively, so that the school continues to improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You make sure that safeguarding pupils is a top priority. All policies and procedures meet the latest government guidance. Training at all levels is up to date. The designated safeguarding lead provides effective guidance for staff. As a result, everyone is fully aware of potential abuse and risks to pupils. These include preventing radicalisation, female genital mutilation, domestic violence and keeping a close eye on those vulnerable pupils who care for members of their family. Pupils are fully aware of how to keep safe when using technology.

Safeguarding records are detailed and of high quality. The learning mentors form part of the safeguarding team. They provide additional safeguarding measures, as each takes responsibility for specific areas. The safeguarding learning mentor plays a crucial role in making sure that incidents and concerns are meticulously recorded and referred to the appropriate agencies. She is usually the first port of call for any parents who may have a concern. Learning mentors also make home visits to new families and form a trusting relationship with these families. As a result, they are able to spot any potential problems quickly and put in place support and guidance if and when required.

The school liaises effectively with external agencies to safeguard pupils. There is a clear and systematic approach to all aspects of safeguarding. All the required vetting checks for all staff, including supply staff and volunteers, are undertaken rigorously. Governors make sure that all statutory requirements are met. The safeguarding governor reviews all safeguarding aspects on a regular basis. He is highly supportive and will follow up tenaciously any concerns that have been referred to outside agencies.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry focused on achievement in the early years and in key stage 1. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has

historically been low. More recently there is a rising trend. In 2016, 57.4% of children achieved this standard but this still remains below the national average. In 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics was below average. Although the proportion of Year 2 pupils achieved well at the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics, too few achieved at greater depth and, particularly, disadvantaged pupils.

- You explained that because the school has no nursery provision, children enter Reception with a wide range of pre-school experiences from over 50 settings, or with no pre-school experience at all. However, most make good progress from starting points which are usually well below those typical for their age. Inspection observations established that children work and play in an exciting and stimulating environment. Adults plan relevant activities which engage children exceptionally well. All groups of children in Reception make good progress, with most achieving the national expectations at the end of the year.
- You have improved the teaching of phonics. It is now taught systematically through targeted teaching adapted to challenge different ability groups. As a result, pupils are currently making good progress in their phonic knowledge. Equally, this is helping younger pupils to develop their reading and writing skills more effectively. Lower prior attaining and the most able pupils who read to inspectors, including disadvantaged pupils, read confidently. They clearly enjoy reading. Younger pupils show great perseverance, and are keen to try out things for themselves. They cautioned inspectors when reading saying 'No questions and no help until I get to the end'.
- Leaders have focused on securing accurate assessments through cross-checks with colleagues and with other schools. You explained that teachers are more confident in their assessments. They set ambitious targets for all ability groups and are better able to identify when pupils are working beyond age-related expectations. Thus they are able to pitch activities that stretch the most able pupils. You explained that pupil progress meetings are fundamental in identifying those pupils who are at risk of underachieving. Support is quickly put in place to boost their progress. Inspection evidence, including work in books and school information, confirms that both younger and older pupils of all ability groups are making better progress in reading and writing.
- The second line of enquiry looked at the progress of pupils across key stage 2, particularly in mathematics. In 2016, unvalidated information signalled significant variations in the progress made by different groups of Year 6 pupils. This was especially so for disadvantaged pupils who find learning difficult and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, attainment in mathematics was below average.
- You have identified mathematics as a key priority. You have appointed a new mathematics leader who is working with a local authority consultant. Staff have good professional development and training. As a consequence, there is greater emphasis on planning activities which enable pupils of all abilities to work to their full potential. This is securing pupils' fluency and mastery of mathematics through practical activities, visual prompts and discussion.
- You provided inspectors with progress information of those who find learning

difficult and/or have special educational needs or disabilities when they were in Year 6. From 2015 to 2016, these pupils made good progress as a result of very small teaching groups and targeted interventions. However, gaps remained in their learning.

- Your achievement information confirms that current pupils are making better progress in mathematics across the school. Nonetheless, our joint observations demonstrated that it remains weaker than other subjects. The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not being challenged to work in greater depth in both key stages. These pupils waste valuable learning time completing work that they find too easy.
- The third line of enquiry concentrated on the attendance rates of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Overall attendance in 2016 was below average and particularly so for those two groups. This inspection found that although overall attendance is now broadly average, these two groups do not attend school regularly enough. This is certainly having a negative impact on their learning and progress, especially in mathematics.
- You explained that a range of strategies have been put in place to improve their attendance. A learning mentor works closely with specific families and disadvantaged pupils have free places in the breakfast club. Nevertheless, it is too early to see the impact of this work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- work in mathematics always makes pupils think hard about their learning, especially the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils
- disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attend school on a regular basis.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Enfield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mary Hinds
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors agreed to prioritise the following areas with school leaders at the start of the inspection:

- the achievement of children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1
- achievement in mathematics in key stage 2, especially for disadvantaged pupils,

the most able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities

- attendance rates, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspectors carried out the following activities to explore these areas during the inspection: meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, a group of staff and governors, including the chair of the governing body; a discussion was held with the local authority representative; inspectors observed teaching and learning in most classes and scrutinised work and progress information relating to a selection of pupils; a wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including in relation to school improvement and safeguarding; inspectors examined 157 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View; 40 staff responses and 176 pupil responses were also taken into consideration.