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Mrs A Godfrey and Mrs J Price
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Dear Mrs Godfrey and Mrs Price

Short inspection of Dunalley Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 2017, 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 October 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. This is because, together with an effective and challenging governing body, you are continuously seeking to improve the school. You have been particularly effective in managing the school through significant changes over the past few years, which include building works, various staff changes and a full reconstitution of the governing body. Each change was well considered and undertaken for the betterment of pupils and to ensure that the school promotes the inclusive and nurturing values which are its true culture. This is coupled with a strong determination to ensure that pupils achieve well. One parent, whose view was typical, wrote, '[This is] a brilliant, nurturing school that positively challenges and supports children to flourish academically and socially.'

Pupils are very happy and busy. In fact, from the start of the morning there are focused activities to support pupils with their learning and these continue across the school day. Pupils enjoy the various learning activities that take place and understand how these help them. At other times, pupils play and integrate well together, showing mutual care and respect. Pupils are proud and keen to have a stake in key school decisions, such as through the school council and the eco-committee. The wider approach of staff builds pupils' confidence and their resilience in learning. Pupils are confident to 'have a go' and are also supportive of one another in lessons.

Since the last inspection, you have worked through a series of changes which have brought inevitable challenges. However, together with a relentless and knowledgeable governing body, you have continued to take the right steps to improve teaching, learning and assessment. One of the biggest strengths in the school's work is in the continuing development of staff to take up key posts and responsibilities. This builds strong internal capacity for improvement and has led to the successful appointment of one of the co-heads in September 2016. Furthermore, other leaders, such as the deputy head and a new special educational needs coordinator, are being well trained and redeployed to secure further improvements to teaching and learning. High-quality professional development has also been effective, so that teaching assistants have taken up teaching posts in the school. As a result, there are high-calibre staff capable of delivering the high-quality standard of education and care that you expect for the pupils.

You and other leaders have also revised the use of accountability measures and systems, so that staff are held strongly to account. School priorities are driven through staff performance and management processes. There is, therefore, a clear link to the school development plan and staff performance reviews. These typically reflect pupil-led challenges to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics. You also ensure that pupils' progress is reviewed through regular professional meetings and 'intervention overviews'. Consequently, identified pupils are making strong progress to catch up. They include, for example, targeted girls in mathematics. You and governors also have an effective approach to evaluating the impact of different interventions, aptly described by your chair of governors as, 'assess – intervene – assess again!' This approach means that resources and time are not wasted on activities that make little or no difference to pupils. Teachers also benefit from mentoring and coaching sessions, as well as visits to other schools, so that they are continuously supported and challenged to improve.

The areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been successfully met. Teachers ensure that pupils take a full and active part in lessons. Pupils work collaboratively and interact with each other to complete tasks and evaluate their learning. Furthermore, teaching assistants make useful contributions and provide appropriately targeted support as well as lead interventions. However, to continue to improve teaching and raise standards, pupils need to be able to write for a wider variety of reasons across the curriculum and in such a way that encourages sustained and purposeful writing, especially in key stage 1. In addition, teachers must ensure that pupils can deepen their mathematical understanding and reasoning through various problems, situations and contexts in daily mathematics lessons to raise standards in mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and other leaders ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding. All staff, including the designated safeguarding leads, are appropriately trained to be able to undertake work with children and to keep them safe. As a result, staff are vigilant and know what to do in response to a wide range of situations. Their awareness is a critical factor in being able to recognise and refer any concerns

quickly to leaders, where further and appropriate action is taken. You are meticulous and tenacious on behalf of the children. For example, records and emails show how you challenge other professional agencies and their recommendations to be sure that children have their needs met.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Governors complete checks of the work of leaders, for example, in regularly reviewing the single central record and making sure that the school is fully compliant with current regulations and legislation. Systems and processes are effective and lead to a knowledgeable and aware staff.

Pupils feel safe and know how to stay safe in a variety of situations, for example, when using the internet to play or work online. Pupils are happy and trust school staff. They know what bullying is and feel this is typically rare at the school. Pupils believe strongly that staff deal well with any rare incidents of bullying or anti-social behaviour as this is so opposed to the very strong, caring, supportive and nurturing ethos of the school.

Inspection findings

- My first key line of enquiry focused on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to improve outcomes for pupils in key stage 1. This is because national data in 2016 showed that rates of progress, particularly for middle- and low-attaining pupils, were lower than expected, especially in writing and mathematics. Since that time, you have revised and improved those ways by which you track pupils. Teachers and other leaders know the pupils well, especially those who need to catch up quickly. Teaching plans and interventions target pupils effectively and ensure that work is well matched to their needs. Regular reviews with senior leaders mean that teachers are held to account for progress and there is a very clear expectation that 'catch-up' work is swift and effective. Additional deployment of teachers, changes to staffing arrangements and further professional training, for example, in daily phonics delivery and approaches to writing, are continuing to support pupils well. As a result, standards are rising and rates of pupils' progress seen in workbooks are improving. However, as discussed, it is imperative to continue tracking back to check the previous starting points of all pupils to ensure that they are making strong progress over time as well as in each individual year.
- My second line of enquiry focused on the rates of progress of different groups of pupils across the school and how effectively leaders identify and respond to these if progress stalls. In particular, there was a focus on disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as how well boys in reading and girls in mathematics are being supported and challenged when they need to catch up. As with the first line of enquiry, you have taken effective action to improve teaching, learning and assessment. A detailed workbook analysis showed the precision and accuracy in your assessments and how you fully triangulate this to check pupils' rates of progress. Assessment information is used quickly to adjust teaching and provision or to set up additional work and interventions for pupils. For example, you deployed a

specialist English teacher to focus on pupils, including the most able writers in Year 6. You and other leaders, particularly the deputy, use strong subject knowledge to check the age-appropriate standards for pupils across the school. As a result, you take immediate and effective action to support pupils. A group of Year 6 girls told me how effective mathematics interventions had been in improving their confidence and skills in understanding angles and long division as well as decimals and fractions. One pupil, representing the views of the group, said, 'It really helped and you kind of want to do more!' In addition, you have taken effective action to work with parents and families of disadvantaged pupils through high-quality discussions ('structured conversations') which, together with a 'vulnerability matrix', have been highly effective in identifying barriers and then ensuring that teachers plan to meet the pupils' needs most effectively. However, teachers need to prioritise the key skills, knowledge and understanding for pupils that will make the biggest difference to their progress. Teachers sometimes focus more on the teaching process or strategy itself, rather than on the most urgent skills needed to support a pupil for improvement.

- My third line of enquiry focused on how effectively you and other leaders are improving the attendance of key groups of pupils, in particular those who have special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils. You are using the full range of steps and measures to challenge and support families, including gentle coaxing and support but extending to issuing warning letters, where appropriate, about legal action. You work effectively with the children and family support worker in the school, as well as other professional partners and organisations, to support the most vulnerable pupils and families. As a result, the overall attendance compares well with the national average and the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent have dropped significantly within the academic year. There have also been some strong improvements in individual cases where you have successfully intervened and challenged. However, absence for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as disadvantaged pupils is still high and reducing these absences remains a priority for them and your school.
- My fourth key line of enquiry focused on safeguarding. I describe above how well pupils are kept safe, through a strong culture of safeguarding.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- standards continue to rise at the end of key stages 1 and 2, especially through improving pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics and providing further high-quality opportunities for writing across the curriculum
- teachers use assessment information to prioritise key skills, knowledge and understanding to accelerate pupils' progress
- they continue to improve the attendance of particular pupils, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Stewart Gale
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with both co-headteachers to agree the timetable and inspection activities for the day. I also worked extensively with you across the whole day and in the majority of inspection activities. Together, we met with the deputy head to undertake a detailed review of standards and evaluate pupils' progress in workbooks in Years 2 and 6. I scrutinised safeguarding records, including staff recruitment, vetting procedures and recent audits. I reviewed evidence to evaluate how rigorously you follow up safeguarding with other professional agencies. Together, we visited lessons in key stage 1 and otherwise, predominantly in Year 6, to evaluate the effectiveness of provision. This involved looking at a range of books and talking with different pupils in line with our agreed key lines of enquiry. I also met with representatives of the governing body and reviewed school documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary and sample reports of governors' visits. I also spoke with Year 6 pupils who needed to catch up in reading and mathematics. Furthermore, I took full account of the 98 responses to Parent View and the 69 responses made by pupils, as well as the 33 responses made by staff. I read and took account of the comments also made by parents in the free texts received for the inspection.