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20 June 2018

Mrs Louise Youngman
Priory Primary School
Greyfriars
Bedford
Bedfordshire
MK40 1JD

Dear Mrs Youngman

No formal designation inspection of Priory Primary School

Following my visit on 6 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This monitoring inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was concerned about a decline in standards at the school. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve standards.

Evidence

During my visit I met with you, the inclusion teacher, the geography, physical education (PE) and science leaders and the admissions and attendance officer. I also met with the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority. Additionally, I held a telephone conversation with the vice-chair of governors. I also formally met with a small group of pupils to gain their views on their school experience.

You and I visited every classroom to talk to pupils, observe them at work and to look at their books. Our visits concentrated on pupils' learning in reading, writing, mathematics and the wider curriculum subjects.

I scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. I also considered records of pupils' attendance, your improvement plans and minutes from governing body meetings. I evaluated your most recent information on pupils' outcomes in every year group and looked at recent parents' responses to surveys you have undertaken.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school continues to be outstanding and that safeguarding is effective.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the school has expanded, from being a lower school provision, to a primary school. The first Year 6 cohort to sit the national tests will be in 2018/19.

The school is a smaller-than-average primary school with 184 pupils on roll, including children in the Nursery. There is a high proportion of pupils who attend the school from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is also above the national average. While the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is below average, the proportion with education, health and care plans, or a statement of special educational needs, is above average. More pupils leave or join the school at different times of the year than is found in other schools across the country.

Since the previous inspection there have been changes in leadership at the school. In January 2017, you were promoted from assistant headteacher to headteacher. An established member of the teaching team then took up the post of assistant headteacher. These internal promotions have resulted in other staffing changes elsewhere in the school.

Inspection findings

Under your energising and motivational leadership, the school continues to provide an extremely high-quality education for children and pupils of all abilities. You are very well supported by your leaders, including governors, and all staff in establishing and maintaining the highest expectations of how pupils should behave and what they are capable of achieving. All pupils respond exceptionally well to these expectations. Consequently, children and pupils' start to their education is an outstanding one.

The inspection took place due to concerns around children's and pupils' low attainment in both early years and key stage 1 outcomes. This is because, over time, the proportion of children leaving Reception achieving a good level of development has been below the national average. Additionally, in key stage 1, pupils' attainment in the last two years has been below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.

While this is the case, over time at both the end of Reception and key stage 1, attainment is consistently improving in all aspects when compared with 2016 and 2017 published outcomes. Additionally, inspection evidence confirms that published information does not give a fully accurate picture about the starting points, and

progress, of the children and pupils in your care.

Children who enter the early years do so with knowledge and skills significantly below those typical for their age. Their skills are particularly low in communication and language, with many children not being able to speak English. The well-planned, excellent-quality learning and experiences offered to children ensure that they catch up as much as possible and make strong progress from their starting points. Your focus on the skills that these children need to be able to start to read, write and be aware of number is carefully planned and suited to each individual child's learning needs. This gives children the best possible chance to establish firm foundations for learning and go on to be better prepared for their transition into Year 1. As a result, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is improving year-on-year. Your early years team offers a thorough grounding to children in both Nursery and Reception. This ensures that, by the end of Year 1, a higher proportion of pupils meet the national standards for phonics and, by the end of Year 2, the vast majority of pupils have caught up with pupils nationally.

You and your leaders carefully, and very precisely, track each pupil's progress throughout the time they are at your school. The majority of pupils join the school part way through their primary education: very often their starting points are also significantly below those typical for pupils of their age. This is because the majority of these pupils enter the school in the early stages of learning English. You have exceptional systems and processes in place that induct pupils well. The inclusion teacher is pivotal in this work. The visible impact of these systems is that pupils very quickly have access to individualised support that enables them to make the most progress possible. Teachers then successfully continue to build on the excellent progress that pupils make, which is resulting in pupils' attainment rapidly improving throughout key stage 2. Subsequently, your moderated assessment information indicates that a higher proportion of Year 5 pupils are on target to achieve at least expected standards by the time they leave Year 6. This represents outstanding progress from pupils' starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.

Teaching across the school provides exemplary opportunities for pupils to learn well, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is because teachers and teaching assistants work together very well to ensure that all pupils are well supported and are able to do their best. You, your leaders and staff all have the highest expectations of pupils and children. They all want pupils to achieve well and, consequently, successfully plan and deliver lessons that meet the needs of, and challenge, all pupils, including the most able. As a result, pupils make consistently outstanding progress from their starting points. On the rare occasion that pupils fall behind, leaders quickly put effective strategies in place to remedy this underachievement.

Pupils' learning attitudes are a strength of the school. They are extremely positive. This is as a result of a well-planned and thought-through curriculum. The curriculum

at Priory Primary is unique to the school. All leaders use the accurate information gathered from the assessments to plan a broad curriculum that is very precisely planned and, subsequently, suited to the wide range of experiences and capabilities of pupils. There are ample opportunities for pupils to talk, work together and use their first-hand experiences to shape their learning. The quality of work seen in books further confirms that children and pupils make very strong progress from their individual starting points across a wide range of subjects.

There is a well-developed culture of inclusion for all pupils. Leaders closely follow the progress that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, make, with rigour and great care. Leaders' and governors' views are that 'if a child needs support, no matter what their need, leaders will make sure it happens'. This ethos permeates the school. Consequently, all pupils receive swift, appropriate individualised support that maximises their chances of achieving well.

You, your leaders and the governing body ensure that the school meets all its statutory requirements for safeguarding well. This includes the rigorous checking of the suitability of adults to work with children. Appropriate checks are made on visitors to the school. You take an active approach to keeping children safe. Your knowledge of the families and the local community enable you to work effectively with families to provide appropriate support. Leaders record and manage any concerns effectively. They are scrupulous about ensuring that they are all followed through to conclusion and continual monitoring is in place. As a result, children and pupils are well looked after and kept safe.

You identify that attendance is a continuing concern. Supporting families to ensure that pupils are punctual and attending school regularly is a challenge you and your staff face. However, the attendance and admissions officer works tirelessly with families. Your strategies are securing consistently better attendance and a reduction in persistent absence.

Governors are knowledgeable and committed to sustaining the school's high-quality work. Governors have a range of professional skills that they use to good effect. They have a detailed understanding of the school's priorities and, while having the utmost respect for you and your leaders' work, they are rigorous in the ways they challenge you and your leaders to ensure that pupils get the best education possible.

The children and pupils at Priory Primary School are a credit to you. They are extremely proud of their school and are keen to do their best. Pupils are ambitious and commented upon the recent 'aspirations week' whereby they learned about careers they could follow from all walks of life. Pupils talked excitedly about their wish to be doctors, teachers and footballers. Behaviour in lessons, and around school, is exemplary and reflects the school's effective strategies and fundamental ethos of high expectations. Pupils' very confident attitudes to learning lead to a

focused, purposeful and calm environment, which in turn has a very positive impact on their academic, personal, social and emotional development.

External support

The local authority generally provides light-touch support to the school and you additionally request further input. This is helpful and effective in providing you with an external view of the school's work. You also wisely select external support carefully to make sure it meets the needs of the school. As part of your determination to continually improve the school's practice, you access the expertise of educational advisers alongside the local authority to challenge, check and verify the quality of all aspects of the school's work.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to improve pupils' attainment so it reflects the outstanding progress pupils make from their starting points, ensuring that pupils leave Year 6 well prepared for the next stages of their education.
- Ensure that the exemplary work to promote good attendance and reduce persistent absence continues so pupils consistently attend school well and understand how this will help them to achieve well over time.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding
Her Majesty's Inspector