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Mrs Catherine Veale
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Dear Mrs Veale

Short inspection of Minet Nursery and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 18 April 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your clear and determined leadership has ensured that those around you share your passion for school improvement. Your meticulous monitoring of all aspects of the school's work has enabled you to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

You have developed a highly capable team of middle leaders who have made a significant impact on raising standards. Together you ensure that teachers receive the training and guidance needed to deliver effective learning. You know the community well, and parents and carers are positive about the way you have strengthened relationships. They report that they feel 'welcome' and 'part of the school'.

All cultures and abilities are reflected in well-maintained displays of pupils' work, which promote high aspirations and British values. The atmosphere around the school is calm and friendly. Pupils are polite, show respect to adults and each other and are keen to learn. They participate well in lessons. Pupils understand why education is important and how it will help them when they are older to, in their own words, become 'doctors', 'architects', 'scientists' and 'teachers'.

You are well supported by a team of skilled and highly effective governors who have a clear vision for the school. They work closely with you to identify priorities and evaluate progress. They have a sharp focus on school development and visit the

school often. Governors ask challenging questions of you and other leaders and, like you, are very ambitious for the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are in place and fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a high quality. Pupils report that they feel safe at school, and parents support this view. Pupils have a secure understanding of issues such as road safety, 'stranger danger' and what to do if they get lost. They know that bullying is unkind and feel confident to report it if they or one of their friends were being bullied.

All staff have received the required safeguarding training to support their knowledge of the government's current statutory guidance. Clear safeguarding procedures are in place and staff know how to report concerns. Leaders engage well with external agencies to help safeguard pupils. Governors are clear about their duties to ensure that pupils are safe, and regularly audit safeguarding practice within the school.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed upon a number of key lines of enquiry. The first was to consider how effective leaders' actions have been in ensuring challenge for higher-attaining pupils, including those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, so that they make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Although more pupils met age-related expectations in 2017, fewer than average achieved the higher standards of which they are capable at the end of key stage 1. Leaders in mathematics and English provide highly effective support to colleagues and ensure that reading, writing and number skills are taught systematically. They monitor pupils' progress regularly by visiting classes to observe teaching, looking at books and talking to pupils to check understanding.
- You are clear about the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils and have ensured that additional funding is used appropriately to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Regular progress meetings focus on the next steps needed to improve learning and set ambitious targets for higher-attaining pupils. Teachers have an accurate view of what pupils need to learn, and a range of strategies and interventions are in place to support and challenge pupils. Current school data shows that although there is still some work to do to ensure that more disadvantaged pupils achieve the higher standards, their progress over time is good.
- The school has had a strong focus on strengthening pupils' reading skills and developing their enjoyment of reading. Recent book-making activities have inspired pupils, who speak very positively about reading. Challenging texts are available in classrooms, and this is ensuring that the most able pupils routinely have access to appropriate reading material.
- A structured approach to the teaching of phonics ensures that the most able readers quickly move on to more challenging learning that develops their

comprehension skills and ensures deeper learning. Teachers check that pupils cannot only read the words on the page, but also have a clear understanding of the vocabulary. Teachers ensure that most-able pupils also develop skills such as prediction, finding information in a text, and summarising. As a result, they are quickly developing the skills needed to work at greater depths of understanding.

- The curriculum provides lots of opportunities for pupils to write in a range of subjects. The skills of spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting are well taught in literacy lessons. Writing in literacy books shows that pupils are developing the skills needed to be effective writers. Higher-ability pupils act on the guidance teachers provide to help them make their writing more interesting and precise, and benefit from opportunities to edit their work. However, in other subjects, teachers do not maintain the same high expectations, and the standards of writing are not as high as seen in pupils' writing books. The most able pupils do not have opportunities to write at length across the curriculum. This is because the amount of writing they produce is frequently limited by the space provided on a worksheet for their answer. While the curriculum is engaging and motivates pupils, it lacks challenge, for example in history, science and geography. There are few opportunities for most-able learners to deepen their knowledge about the topic they are studying. Teachers do not require the most able pupils to deal with more sophisticated ideas or think harder about what they are learning in these subjects.
- A new approach to the teaching of mathematics is enabling pupils to study in greater depth and develop a secure understanding of mathematical concepts. Pupils have positive attitudes toward mathematics. The resources and visual images help pupils develop an understanding of how the number system works. Teachers are careful to ensure that not being fluent in English should not be a barrier to achieving highly in mathematics. The mathematics leader has developed a very effective planning model which provides more challenge for pupils in Year 2. As a result, the level of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils, is high and ensures strong progress over time. Pupils are able to reason, explain, and prove their answers, one telling me, 'That's the best bit because you really have to know how you get your answers; you can't just get it right.' This practice is not so well established in the rest of the school where, at times, the most able pupils are not as well challenged, and spend time doing things they can do already.
- Leaders rightly identified that children in the early years, particularly boys, had not performed as well as other children nationally last year. I therefore looked at what leaders were doing now to ensure that boys achieve as well as girls by the time they enter Year 1. There were improvements in outcomes for Reception pupils by the end of the early years last year. This area is well led and managed. The curriculum has been developed, assessment systems are effective, and staff receive regular feedback, advice and support to develop their own practice. Some adults in the early years are skilled at allowing children to learn through play. In these instances, children take responsibility, organise things, make independent choices, include others, and talk about what they are doing, rather than simply answer questions.

- A range of purposeful play activities are in place which help promote learning effectively for pupils. Teaching in Nursery is very effective because it provides pupils with lots of opportunities, both inside and outside, to solve problems, mark-make and work together. The Nursery is full of opportunities to investigate and explore. Children benefit from the way in which the environment is set up because they can choose and access resources easily. The outside learning environment is designed to ensure that language and number feature strongly, and many adults ask questions that get children thinking beyond a simple 'yes' or 'no'. As a result, many children in Nursery can speak in sentences, being keen to ask the inspector questions themselves!
- Learning is not yet as strong in Reception because, although the indoor classroom provides opportunities for children to write and explore mark-making, the outdoor environment is not as rich. This impacts particularly on the high numbers of boys who choose to spend large parts of their day working and learning outside. Although there is a writing area outside, there are no opportunities for boys to develop writing, drawing or recording skills in the areas they enjoy working in, for example in the construction area or sand tray. In addition, pupils in Reception do not have as many opportunities to solve problems and collaborate with each other due to limited opportunities for them to work together.
- Finally, I considered how effective leaders' actions have been to ensure good attendance for all pupils and reduce persistent absence. You have worked very effectively in this area. Every absence is followed up, and governors are firm in discouraging term-time holiday absence. You provide support for families when necessary and reward improved effort. You make the link between good attendance and good learning outcomes clear to parents, and encourage all to attend school every day. As a result, overall attendance is in line with the national figure, and persistent absence has been greatly reduced.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further improve outcomes for boys in Reception by making sure that they have more opportunities to read, write, collaborate and solve problems, particularly in the outdoor learning environment
- they improve pupils' writing across all subjects by applying more effectively the skills learned during English lessons
- teachers' expectations for the most able in all subjects, including mathematics, are consistently strong across the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Lou Anderson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with the headteacher, senior, middle and subject leaders, governors, and a representative from the local authority. I scrutinised pupils' work in English and mathematics, and examined a range of pupils' subject and topics books. I visited lessons in the early years and key stage 1 to observe learning. I talked to pupils about their learning, both at formal and informal times, throughout the day. I met with parents at the start of the school day and analysed the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I also analysed the responses to the staff questionnaire. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans, pupils' attendance information, documentation related to safeguarding, and the school's assessment and behaviour information.