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Miss S L Irving
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Dear Miss Irving

Short inspection of Forest Park Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 March 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 June 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Governors have made several key appointments in the last two years to strengthen the leadership of the school further. You were appointed as headteacher in September 2015 and have appointed other leaders with specialisms and expertise in key areas to complement the leadership team. There have been several changes in staff since the last inspection.

You and leaders know the school exceptionally well. You have devised a wide range of systems and procedures to track, analyse and respond to trends in pupil achievement. This is particularly important at Forest Park, given the high levels of mobility. For the year 2015/16, school data shows that 59 pupils left the school and 58 arrived. You manage this mobility effectively. Pupils and their families are warmly welcomed to your school and quickly settle as a result of carefully planned support.

Leaders and governors demonstrate considerable drive and ambition. Forest Park is committed to making a difference to children's lives. In the last year, you have paid particular attention to enhancing the learning environment, both inside and outside. The new school library and outdoor reading area demonstrate your vision to 'sparkle' and promote a love of learning.

Pupils' behaviour was very positive during the inspection. Pupils are inquisitive and courteous. They are keen to share their learning and greeted me with 'hellos' and questions throughout the day. Pupils in Year 5 attended an outdoor education centre on the day of the inspection. They returned with beaming faces and had clearly enjoyed their opportunity to learn more about the Anglo-Saxons.

At the last inspection, the school was asked to further improve teaching and thereby raise attainment in writing. In 2013, 2014 and 2015, attainment in writing improved year on year in key stages 1 and 2. In 2016, national assessment procedures changed and the school's attainment and progress scores in writing were below the national averages. However, progress scores in reading and mathematics were above the national averages. Since September 2016, leaders and governors have established further training for staff in the teaching of writing. Writing rightly remains a priority for the school and is clearly cited within development plans. As a result of the continued focus, the school's own assessment information shows that pupils are now making more rapid rates of progress in writing and the gap between reading and mathematics is closing. This is also evident in pupils' books. Work in books demonstrates rapid progress in writing from pupils' different starting points.

Following support from the local authority, leaders and governors have effectively addressed any emerging weaknesses. The early years foundation stage has been significantly developed and is led by a specialist leader of education with particular expertise in the early years and a successful track record of school improvement. Similarly, a leader has also been appointed to drive further improvements within the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result of leaders' work, special needs provision and the early years are now highly organised and rates of progress are accelerating.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have created a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff and visitors are left in no doubt about their responsibilities. If leaders have any concerns, they liaise with families and agencies to ensure that children are kept safe. Leaders ensure that the single central record and personnel files follow statutory guidance. Staff and governors have received training on the 'Prevent' duty. They are aware of any local risks and know exactly how to act if they have concerns about extremism.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection I met with you and leaders to agree key lines of enquiry to scrutinise during the day. The first key line of enquiry was to review how well the school is supporting pupils to attend regularly. Attendance has improved considerably at Forest Park. In 2016, there were some weaknesses in overall attendance and in persistent absence for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' attendance is carefully monitored by leaders. If leaders have a concern, they liaise with families and other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe and work towards improving their attendance. The

school has also established a range of incentives to improve attendance. As a result of effective intervention, whole-school attendance is currently in line with national levels. Any persistent absence of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has declined considerably.

- Disadvantaged pupils are well supported at Forest Park. Funding is used effectively to provide additional adult support and enrich the curriculum. Assessment information shows that there are no gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Work in mathematics and writing books shows clear improvements and strong rates of progress from pupils' different starting points.
- Progress is now accelerating in writing but was below national levels at the end of both key stages in 2016. Books show that pupils are given frequent opportunities to practise their basic skills and write at length. Pupils' stories, recounts and reports demonstrate their growing ability to make adventurous word choices, use a range of punctuation correctly and engage the reader. Leaders are aware that teachers will require further training and support to ensure that improvements and better rates of progress are sustained.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. Leaders track the achievement of this group of pupils very carefully and make changes to support as and when appropriate. Rates of progress for this group of pupils have been variable in the past. As a result of leaders' work, provision is much more focused and the needs of pupils are very well understood. Though rates of progress are now accelerating, some improvements are relatively new. Leaders and governors recognise that improvements must now be embedded and sustained. Parents that I spoke to during the inspection speak very highly of the support their children receive.
- In 2016, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development almost doubled in the early years, albeit from a relatively low base. Early years provision has been further developed to reflect the needs of children. The indoor and outdoor learning environments have been designed to promote learning across the curriculum. During the inspection, children were busy building farms and washing cars in role-play areas. Staff skilfully encourage children to talk about what they are doing and why. Assessment systems are used effectively to track exactly what children can do and to plan new activities that excite and challenge them. The leader of early years is a recognised expert in her field. The leader and the early years team communicate a real sense of passion about their work and are committed to sustaining developments.
- At Forest Park, a very high proportion of children speak English as an additional language. The school population speaks over 30 different languages. The promotion of communication and language is at the heart of the school's work. When new pupils arrive, staff work with families to carefully identify pupils' needs and ensure that they are integrated successfully into the school. Additional classes and adult support are built into the integration process to ensure that pupils catch up quickly where they need to. Over time, there are very few gaps between the outcomes for this group of pupils and others within school.
- The behaviour of pupils is a strength of the school. During the inspection, pupils were exceptionally courteous, kind and polite. Leaders track any incidents of poor

behaviour and are quick to offer support where it is required. Pupils respond very positively to the school's 'Kerching' reward system. Pupils are able to earn credits for demonstrating good learning and behaviour. These credits can be used to purchase goodies in the school shop.

- Governors are actively involved in the life of the school. Minutes of meetings demonstrate the effective challenge and support offered by governors to leaders. The chair of governors visits the school weekly. As well as keeping abreast of school improvements, the chair meets with pupils to seek their views and gain an understanding of their learning. The chair recently presided over a contest where Year 6 pupils used their persuasive skills to convince imaginary investors of the benefits of new apps that they had been designing.
- The local authority works with the school to identify strengths and any areas of development. The school's adviser has effectively supported leaders through a time of change. New leaders have worked with the local authority and within 'The Seven Stars Collaborative Network' to moderate their work and continually assess the impact they are having on learning. Leaders have benefited considerably from their joint working with other schools and the local authority. Leaders have capacity to secure further improvements and are an impressive team of forward-thinking committed professionals.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the provision for and progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to be rigorously monitored and steps are taken quickly to address any underachievement
- improvements in the early years are fully embedded so that strong rates of progress are maintained and a higher proportion of children achieve a good level of development
- the best practice within the school continues to be shared, particularly in the teaching of writing, so that outcomes improve further.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with members of the school leadership team to evaluate the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and school improvement plans. During my discussions with leaders, we agreed key lines of enquiry to test out the impact that the school is having on learning.

I met with the school's business manager and headteacher to review the school's single central record and safer recruitment procedures.

I met with parents at the school gate, reviewed the 20 responses on free text and the 21 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey. I took account of the 54 responses to the staff questionnaire and 38 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

I heard pupils read in Year 2 and talked to pupils throughout the inspection about their learning.

I discussed the arrangements for safeguarding with the leadership team and the welfare and inclusion manager. I scrutinised a range of documents including child protection files, training records and certificates, risk assessments, governing body minutes, personal education plans, provision maps, induction procedures and policies.

I conducted a learning walk in the early years foundation stage and key stage 1 with leaders. I undertook book scrutinies with leaders and reviewed the quality of learning in English and mathematics across the school.

I held a meeting with five governors, including the chair and vice-chair. I spoke to the school's local authority adviser on the telephone. I spoke to Stoke-on-Trent's strategic manager for pupil achievement on the telephone and met with him in person.