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Mrs Amanda Rush
Headteacher
Leesons Primary School
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Dear Mrs Rush

Short inspection of Leesons Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in February 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 use information effectively to identify when the progress of particular groups of pupils shows signs of slowing and take swift, decisive action to improve outcomes. For example, you have acted effectively to improve the progress of boys in writing and mathematics in key stage 1. You identified that they were not building as well as girls on the good progress they made in the early years. You have also reversed the dip in outcomes for pupils in learning phonics. You have ensured that differences in progress for disadvantaged pupils are diminishing in the current year and that pupils now in Year 2 who did not reach the expected standard are catching up. This 'can do' attitude you so successfully convey motivates your staff and has won the respect of many of your parents.

Governors recently decided to join the Spring Partnership trust after deciding to terminate previous trust arrangements. This came into effect in December 2016. Although it is very early days for these new arrangements, trust executives know the school well and are already challenging you rigorously, helping you to decide on how to drive further school improvement.

You ensure that weaker aspects of provision are tackled using detailed, comprehensible information to help governors understand the issues involved. For example, you have realised that the attendance of some groups of pupils has not

been improving rapidly enough. You have appointed a leader with specific responsibility for improving this. You ensure that governors receive information on attendance rates and the progress of pupils whose attendance is still a cause for concern. The information for the current school year indicates that these steps are leading to rapid improvements, though you are aware that some pupils still miss too much school, including some pupils who are entitled to pupil premium funding.

Middle leaders are really clear about the school's priorities for improvement. They can explain precisely the difference their work is making to outcomes for pupils and use information well to check on how different groups of pupils are progressing.

You have responded effectively to the recommendations for improvement made at your predecessor school's last inspection. Teachers use information about pupils with different abilities skilfully to ensure that work is intriguing and challenging. I saw consistently high expectations for hard work and good presentation in books across the whole school. Teachers and additional adults question pupils effectively and are increasingly focusing these questions on challenging pupils to explain their reasoning and responses to lessons. However, you recognise that this remains a priority for further improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Checks on the suitability of staff are conducted in a timely manner and recorded appropriately. You ensure that new staff understand the safeguarding policy and check up on everyone's understanding of changes in statutory guidance. You keep well-organised and thorough records of safeguarding concerns. The examples we discussed indicate that such concerns are followed up promptly and subsequent work with other professionals is well documented.

Pupils who spoke to me, responded to the Ofsted survey, or answered your own questionnaire are confident about raising concerns and feel safe. Parents typically agree and are particularly appreciative of how accessible you make yourself to discuss any concerns they may have. You keep the curriculum under regular review so that known risks can be covered well when helping pupils learn to stay safe. For example, you recently became concerned that gangs were using social media in new ways to recruit new members. As a result, you have adapted lessons aimed at helping pupils become resilient in resisting being drawn into gang culture.

Inspection findings

- The current progress of boys in writing and mathematics in key stage 1 was a key line of enquiry for this inspection. Outcomes in 2016 indicated that boys were making less progress than girls. You have identified this as a priority for improvement in the current year.
- Teachers in key stage 1 have been successful in improving boys' stamina when writing at length. Middle leaders have helped them review the curriculum so that

boys benefit from reasons to write which appeal more to them. Teachers also provide clear explanations to help boys understand what is expected of them and how to improve their handwriting. As a result, the work I saw in pupils' books shows that the boys currently in key stage 1 are making good progress in their writing.

- Middle leaders have worked with teachers to develop a system of 'assertive mentoring' in mathematics which is helping younger pupils understand how they can improve their work more precisely. This is also helping teachers identify gaps in boys' knowledge and skills. Teachers have higher expectations for the less able boys to make progress in using mathematical language as a result. Most-able boys are expected to use larger numbers when they demonstrate confidence in using calculation methods. Teachers are providing more opportunities to help pupils apply their skills and explain their reasoning as a result of recent training. However, you realise that more needs to be done to ensure that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged to deepen their mathematical understanding.
- We placed a particular focus on looking at the writing of current pupils in key stage 2 who had begun the year with skills typical for their age. The progress of this group had dipped in 2016.
- Current pupils progress quickly to using a wider range of vocabulary and better sentence structure to improve the quality of their writing. Leaders have made sure that teachers picked up gaps in pupils' expected knowledge and skills. For example, they have recognised that many pupils need more help when composing extended sentences. Older pupils' writing demonstrates that they develop confidence in using the key features of different genres more rapidly. For example, pupils in Year 6 are able to incorporate features of different types of poetry into their writing. Older pupils who spoke to me could use technical language when describing the strengths and weaknesses in their own writing, explaining their attitudes and progress eloquently. They enjoy being in what they call 'the pit' when trying new work. They say this is 'difficult to climb out of' but helps them feel challenged to make further progress.
- Pupils' work also demonstrates that pupils can sustain consistency in the use of grammar and punctuation when completing extended writing. The most able pupils are developing an individual writing style. However, some pupils still find it difficult to explain the purpose of their writing because the vocabulary they possess for doing so is limited, which diminishes their confidence.
- You have rightly focused on improving the progress of younger pupils in learning phonics. Current pupils are making better progress. The proportion on track to reach the expected standard by the end of Year 1 is in line with the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and boys who are not on track to meet the standard is diminishing. Current Year 2 pupils who failed to meet the required standard are catching up quickly. Pupils who read to me were determined to decode unfamiliar words and used effective phonics skills to do so. These pupils expressed positive attitudes to reading. Teachers ensure that pupils have more challenging books to take home, which their parents can discuss with them.

- The most able readers choose suitably challenging books and can explain how teachers help them use information texts for research. However, they were less clear about how to explain the techniques and styles of authors they were familiar with. Their vocabulary for explaining more sophisticated features of the books they are reading is sometimes limited.
- Your recent appointment of a leader to drive improvements in attendance has led to a significant reduction in persistent absence, including for disadvantaged pupils. Less than one in 10 pupils are now persistently absent and overall attendance is in line with that for similar schools nationally. You have strengthened the impact of your attendance policy in holding parents to account for ensuring that their child comes to school regularly. Parents are provided with more information about how to seek support when barriers to attendance emerge. However, you recognise that some pupils' attendance continues to be weak, including the attendance of some pupils who are entitled to the pupil premium.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able pupils, including the most able boys and disadvantaged pupils, consistently make good progress in explaining their reasoning and applying their skills in mathematics
- work continues to develop pupils' confidence in using a wider range of vocabulary when discussing and explaining their work
- the improvement in attendance of pupils who continue to be persistently absent, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, remains a priority.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held discussions with senior and middle leaders about their work to improve the school. I met with representatives of the local governing body and held discussions with a representative of the Spring Partnership Trust, which the school has recently joined. I visited classes in each key stage with you, talking to pupils about their work and looking at their books. I heard pupils read and talked with them about safeguarding arrangements. I scrutinised documents related to safeguarding and

leaders' evaluation of the school's performance. Responses to the online Parent View survey were taken into account, including a number of written responses from parents. Outcomes of the electronic pupil and staff survey provided by Ofsted during the inspection were also considered, alongside your own questionnaires of pupils' views.