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Sarah Randall
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Dear Miss Randall

Short inspection of Dartford Bridge Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 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 March 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Following the last inspection, leaders were asked to raise achievement to the highest levels. As a result of your actions, the standards that children reach by the end of early years have risen. In 2017, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was higher than the national average. You have also been successful in raising standards at the end of key stage 1. In 2017, the proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels were very high in reading and more than twice the national averages in writing and mathematics. This prepared pupils well for key stage 2.

Leaders' actions to improve achievement at key stage 2 have been less effective. You told me that you were disappointed in the slow rates of progress that pupils made in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017. Although you have taken some action to improve the quality of teaching in key stage 2, this is not resulting in the improvements in pupils' achievement that are needed. Evidence gathered during the inspection, including a close scrutiny of pupils' work, indicates that rates of progress for current pupils who left key stage 1 with average standards continue to be too variable across key stage 2.

Pupils told me that they enjoy coming to school and learning. They particularly

appreciate their kind teachers and the friendships that they make. I observed pupils in class and around the school, and they were polite, friendly and happy. Pupils told me that this good behaviour is typical.

You introduced a new curriculum at the beginning of this school year in order to make learning more fun and meaningful for pupils. You are pleased with the impact of this so far. The curriculum is enriched well, for example with a good range of educational visits. For example, on the day of the inspection Year 1 pupils visited a local wildlife park as part of their 'paws, claws and whiskers' topic. Year 3 pupils have recently benefited from a visit to a museum to explore how their local area has changed over time.

Governors are supportive of the school. They make frequent visits to talk to staff and pupils to find out about everyday life in school. Governors recognise that they need to be more rigorous in making sure that pupils in key stage 2, especially those whose achievements were average at the end of key stage 1, make the progress that they should.

A few parents had concerns about how well you communicate with them. However, you have made sure that there are several ways in which parents and carers can learn about school life and how they can help their children at home. For example, you have recently held a workshop for parents explaining how mathematics is taught. Other initiatives include inviting parents into school to see 'the human body show', displaying recent work by pupils in Year 4. You have good plans in place to improve communication with parents still further.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, together with your leadership team and governors, have made sure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Appropriate checks are made on new staff. Staff receive timely training so that they understand well the importance of reporting any safeguarding concerns.

Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. They told me about how important it is not to give personal information to anyone on the internet. All staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey agree that the school is a safe place to be.

Governors take their responsibilities for pupils' safety seriously. They work closely with you to carry out safeguarding checks, and make amendments where necessary. A small minority of parents raised concerns about bullying. School records show that the very few incidents of bullying are recorded, investigated and reported to governors. Governors are keen to prevent bullying in school and have worked with pupils to rewrite the anti-bullying policy so that all pupils understand that bullying is wrong and must be reported. Pupils told me that bullying is very rare, but that adults deal with it appropriately when it does occur.

Pupils' rates of attendance overall are higher than the national average. You work

closely with the families of pupils with lower attendance and, as a result, their attendance usually improves. This particularly helps disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked closely at pupils' achievements in key stage 2. We focused on the achievement of pupils who reached average standards at the end of key stage 1 and pupils who are disadvantaged.
- Following the disappointing results for Year 6 in the 2017 national tests, you reviewed the teaching of reading. You told me that not all teachers had a full understanding of what pupils need to know and understand in order to reach the highest standards. As a result, you introduced termly checks on pupils' progress in reading and provided additional training for teachers. Despite these actions, teaching is not consistently developing pupils' deep understanding of texts. Year 6 pupils told me that they do not get sufficient guidance in choosing appropriately challenging books.
- Improving the teaching of writing has been a focus of your work. In 2017, Year 6 pupils made better progress than their predecessors. However, there is still work to be done to make sure that pupils currently in key stage 2, especially those with average prior attainment, make the progress that they should.
- The newly introduced curriculum is giving pupils good opportunities to write for different purposes, for example, writing a diary entry for Anne Frank as part of a Second World War topic in Year 6. However, when we looked at the workbooks of pupils who reached average standards at key stage 1, we saw that teaching is not sufficiently demanding the need for correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. This is slowing pupils' progress.
- You have introduced a new strategy to teach mathematics, designed to encourage pupils to think deeply about their work. However, teaching does not consistently ensure that pupils develop secure basic skills or the skills needed to explain their ideas. The progress of pupils with average prior attainment is not good enough for them to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is too variable. While there are examples of individual pupils who are making good progress this year, there are too many who are not making the progress they should.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they make frequent checks on the achievement of pupils, especially those who left key stage 1 with average standards, to make sure that leaders' actions result in pupils making accelerated progress
- the achievement of pupils in key stage 2, especially those with average prior attainment, is raised by making sure that teaching:
 - emphasises the importance of correct spelling, punctuation and grammar;

- enables pupils to develop a deep understanding of texts read; and
- enables pupils to quickly develop accurate basic mathematical skills and the ability to explain their mathematical thinking.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanna Toulson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher and your assistant headteacher. Most of the inspection activities were carried out jointly with you or your senior leaders. I had a meeting with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. I spoke on the telephone with the local authority representative who has worked with your school. I spoke to parents at the start of the school day and took account of the 74 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the free-text responses. I also took account of the 19 staff responses to the online questionnaire. I spoke to pupils in class as well as with a group to capture their views of school life. I looked at a range of documentation, including an evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school's single central record of staff recruitment checks, attendance information and a sample of governing body minutes.