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Mr Michael Wade
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Dear Mr Wade

Short inspection of Quilters Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 20 February 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. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Governors have taken strong and well-considered strategic decisions, including the decision, very recently, to federate with Quilters Junior school. You, your leaders and governors provide clear direction and this results in a strong sense of community and purpose which motivates staff and pupils to achieve well. Parents, carers and staff alike recognise the very good quality of leadership in your school.

During the previous inspection, many strengths were identified, including: the quality of provision and the good start that children make in the Reception class; the knowledge and commitment to improvement demonstrated by your governors; the support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities; spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and pupils' exemplary behaviour. These all remain strengths.

You continue to offer a broad topic-based curriculum which interests and inspires pupils, allowing them a degree of influence over the direction of their learning. Recent work to further develop progression across the junior and infant schools

will continue to improve progress in particular in foundation subjects, but offers opportunities in all areas.

Since the last inspection, leaders have maintained the good progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 1. The majority of pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress and, as a result, many achieve standards above those expected for their age. Disadvantaged pupils progress as well as others nationally. Despite this good performance, you and your leaders are highly ambitious to increase further the progress that pupils make.

You and your leadership team and governors have rightly sought validation of your judgements about the school from external partners. You understand clearly how well the school is doing and exactly what needs to be done next. You have compelling improvement plans in place which are leading to further rapid improvements. For example, you have identified that although good, outcomes in writing were less strong than in other areas. As a result, leaders have made changes to increase the interest of some pupils in their writing and to strengthen and consolidate teachers' approaches to spelling and handwriting. These actions have led to rapid improvement and a high proportion of pupils are making very strong progress in writing, particularly in the Reception class.

Pupils are articulate, polite and well-mannered. They listen well and respect other people's ideas. Their attitudes to learning are extremely positive. Pupils enjoy their work and talk about their determination to do as well as they can. One pupil summed this up by saying, 'You have to be resilient. That means you try and try again until you get it right.' Pupils are excited and highly motivated by 'quality work' stickers that recognise their achievement and particularly by the system of wearing capes when they demonstrate the qualities your school is working to develop. Parents told me of how the school's approach to learning has helped their children to become more independent and more confident at home and of the efforts the school makes to support them in helping their children to learn.

Parents praise the way the school involves them, for example, in the Reception class, through the excellent 'to and fro' home to school dialogue books. They are highly appreciative of the workshops the school provides and the weekly online family learning tutorials. Parents are particularly complimentary about the support that the school offers for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities and spoke, for example, about performing duties as class representatives on the school council, green team, as class monitors, library assistants and play leaders. They also spoke of the enjoyment they get from attending an interesting range of clubs, including many sports clubs, music, singing, and Spanish. Pupils are proud of their school and proud to be 'Quilteenees'.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. As the safeguarding lead, you place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe and ensure vigilance at all times. You check that records are detailed and of a high quality. All staff, governors and volunteers receive regular training updates and know how to alert leaders to any concerns that they have. All staff take their roles and responsibilities seriously and demonstrate confidence. You work effectively with many external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe and families are well supported. Pre-employment checks on staff and records are comprehensive to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. You take all aspects of health and safety very seriously and there is good provision for pupils who have medical needs.

All parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that their children are safe. All pupils whom I spoke with said that they feel safe at school and that bullying almost never occurs. They are confident that staff would help them if they did have a problem and know how to seek advice if they need it. They have a good awareness of when they may be at risk and how to manage this effectively. You are working particularly hard to offer information to pupils and their families in order to help them to better secure their children's' safety when using the internet and pupils demonstrate a good understanding of this from a very early age.

Inspection findings

- In your previous inspection report, inspectors recognised that in most lessons pupils were making good progress, but also noted some inconsistencies. They asked that leaders further improve teaching by working with partners and sharing expertise within the school. During the inspection, I met with teachers and teaching assistants to discuss what opportunities they are given to develop their practice. They are highly complementary about the guidance and support they are offered by you and senior colleagues. They also value the opportunities they have to work with other colleagues within the school, in the junior school, in the local Billericay Community Trust and through specialist training programmes. They all feel that they are challenged and encouraged to improve. This is also clear in responses staff made to the Ofsted online questionnaire.
- You have redesigned the school performance management systems to ensure shared responsibility across year groups, and this has led to greater sharing of planning and teaching strategies. Your new middle leaders of foundation subjects form a very cohesive team and are working hard to ensure that all expertise is shared. All teaching I observed with you during the inspection showed that teachers plan interesting and challenging lessons which demonstrate strong subject knowledge and significant skills in teachers' and teaching assistants' delivery. Pupils' work showed that they are making strong progress in all year groups.
- The schools' assessment information indicates that almost all pupils across the school are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics as well

as in their foundation subjects. Furthermore, a significant proportion of pupils are making accelerated progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

- During the inspection, I looked closely at the progress being made by pupils currently in the school, in particular at the progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium in early years and in Year 1. This was because in 2017 none of the small number of eligible pupils reached greater depth in the early years assessments, and none achieved the required mark in the Year 1 phonics screening test. You were able to produce evidence that all children and pupils concerned had been well supported through the funding available and had made good progress from their own starting points.
- The third area that we focused on was the extent to which teachers are challenging the most able pupils across the range of their curriculum subjects. This is because challenge for the most able was cited as an area for improvement by inspectors in your previous report. In 2016 and 2017, the most able pupils who exceeded age-related expectations at the end of Reception continued to make good progress in key stage 1. Current school assessment information indicates that this remains the case and teacher assessments for these pupils are currently higher than they have been in the past in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are now assessing pupils rigorously in all foundation subjects and these assessments and the work in pupils' topic books suggest that pupils, including the most able pupils, are making good progress.
- Governors have found resources for additional teachers across the school to support an innovative strategic change to the way that year groups are taught. This is ensuring that as well as teaching assistants providing additional teaching, in every year group, all teaching is refined to meet the needs of the most able and those pupils who need extra support. Leaders have worked with teachers to ensure that all lessons across the curriculum offer pupils tasks at different levels of challenge. With some guidance, pupils may select the level of challenge they are comfortable with and many select the most challenging level within their group. In many lessons, the most able pupils undertake tasks which really engage them in thinking through problems and applying their learning. For example, a Year 1 most-able group was asked to analyse what made a set of toys more or less attractive, and to consider how they had been made. They were then asked to design their own toys and to explain their choices. However, in a few lessons challenge tasks do not always extend pupils' thinking as much as they could.
- Most-able pupils are given access to stretching activities through the local schools partnership and through working with able pupils in the junior school, often on tasks that have real purpose. For example, a group of most-able writers recently worked with junior boys to create a series of high-quality traditional-style stories each exemplifying a school value. These will all be broadcast weekly over the school radio, which is generating great excitement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- progress continues to accelerate in all areas by ensuring that all learning activities across the curriculum extend pupils' thinking
- curriculum provision is further enhanced by deepening collaboration within the federation.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Sutton
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

- During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders, parents, governors and pupils.
- I visited all the classrooms, small group teaching areas and looked at pupils' work. I listened to pupils read and I observed behaviour generally around the school.
- I reviewed the school website and documents, including curriculum plans, the single central record, child protection systems, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, pupil assessment and progress information.
- I took account of the 91 responses by parents and 14 responses from staff to Ofsted's online questionnaires as well as 90 comments from parents by text.