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17 May 2018

Ms Natasha Grant
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Grant

Short inspection of Courtwood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 1 May 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 February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You took on the role of headteacher this term, having previously been head of school. Together with governors and leaders, you have continued to identify key strengths and areas that need to be developed. You have ensured that the school continues to be a happy and nurturing environment. Parents appreciate the strong sense of community. They praised the way in which all children, including those who attend the specialist resource provision for pupils on the autistic spectrum, are included in all aspects of school life.

Together with governors and leaders, you have addressed the areas identified at the time of the last inspection. You have worked with local authority advisors to strengthen leadership and practice in mathematics by joining a local mathematics hub. A new leader has been appointed who is already having an impact on improving teaching and learning. You have an outward-looking approach and have developed strong links with local schools, which are strengthening capacity even more. Governors have made arrangements for the school to join a local multi-academy trust in September in order to cement these relationships and ensure long-term school improvement.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are in place and are fit for purpose. Pupils' safety is very important to all. Pupils report that they feel safe at

school. They demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of issues such as road awareness and e-safety. Pupils understand what to do if they or their friends are bullied. They know that there is always an adult they can share their worries with at school and feel confident that the adults around them will support and help them.

The school works very effectively with external agencies to help safeguard pupils. Leaders have ensured that records are detailed and of high quality. Leaders take appropriate action where there are concerns relating to pupils' safety and well-being. They are relentless and demanding of other agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Leaders ensure that staff are regularly trained and kept up to date with the latest safeguarding guidance. As a result, staff understand their responsibilities and know what to do if they have any safeguarding concerns.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection we agreed upon three main lines of enquiry. The first was to consider what leaders are doing to improve progress and outcomes in mathematics. This was because at the end of early years and key stage 2 in 2017 significantly fewer pupils met the expected standard than others nationally. In addition, by the end of key stage 2 progress in mathematics for all pupils was not as good as it was in reading and writing. We also noted that higher-attaining pupils, those who had achieved well at the end of key stage 1, had not continued to make good progress in key stage 2. I found that the new leader is very committed and enthusiastic about accelerating progress and improving outcomes for all. Books are monitored at least termly and staff meetings have a focus on professional development. Work in books shows that sometimes the most able pupils spend too long working on things they already know or can easily do. This slows progress for higher-attaining pupils as teaching does not encourage them to move quickly to more demanding tasks. Leaders have identified this as an area for development. Plans are in place for the mathematics lead to support teachers further through monitoring and planning support to improve the challenge for most-able learners.
- Training and development has resulted in teachers now having a much better understanding of what greater depth looks like. There is a clear sequence and progression to the teaching of mathematics. Teachers model vocabulary effectively. The use of visual models and images is having a positive impact on pupils' understanding. Pupils cover a range of mathematical ideas, including geometry, number and algebra. Problem-solving has a high profile, particularly in Years 2, 5 and 6, where it is helping to develop pupils' reasoning skills very effectively. I then considered how well leaders have identified and addressed the main barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils; these are pupils for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium grant. This was because outcomes for this group were neither as good as for pupils nationally, nor as good as for other pupils attending the school in reading, writing and mathematics. I found that this group of pupils has increased in the school in recent years. You know your pupils, their families and their circumstances well. You have worked hard to build trusting and supportive relationships. You have

identified barriers to learning and have put much in place to address this. You have used the additional funding provided in creative ways to support academic and emotional development. A skilled nurture team helps to ensure that children are emotionally ready to access learning and teachers provide a range of target opportunities for pupils to access.

- Theatre trips to see plays such as 'Jungle Book' have enhanced learning. The phonic programme ensures that pupils learn to become effective readers by the end of key stage 1. A range of quality reading books in classes provides access and challenge for all pupils. Teachers provide pupils with helpful advice on how to improve their writing, and opportunities to edit their work. This is having a positive impact and helping leaders to ensure that gaps between pupil premium and other pupils are closing. In mathematics, additional teaching for target pupil premium pupils has helped them develop recall of their times tables. This is particularly benefiting those in upper key stage 2, many of whom are now quickly able to use mental mathematics to solve problems in lessons. Well-thought-out interventions are in place, and these are starting to have a positive impact. In-year assessment systems are being refined so the school can better track progress of this group throughout the school. Effective additional support is led by teachers and well-trained teaching assistants. As a result, differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of others are diminishing
- Finally, I considered how effective leaders' actions have been in ensuring that the curriculum is broad and balanced so that pupils are well engaged and their learning is accelerated. I found that pupils in the early years spend time in both the inside and outside classrooms. Children in the Reception class demonstrated positive attitudes to learning and had good levels of concentration and engagement. In addition, they could make and regulate their own games, creating rules, taking turns and sharing resources. Although the majority of children chose to work and play in the outside area, there were few opportunities for them to read, write, mark-make, use number and problem-solve when working there.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum in key stages 1 and 2 is broad and balanced. Pupils enjoy the topics they learn about. These hook children effectively because they are interested in the things they study. School grounds are used creatively to support learning. Pupils visit an onsite woodland area called 'Wise Owl Wood'. This enriches the curriculum and also provides positive social experiences for pupils to develop skills such as teamwork, collaboration, confidence and resilience. The wider curriculum does not provide depth of study for higher-attaining pupils. They do not get opportunities to study subjects in more detail or at greater depth. As a result, higher-attaining pupils are not challenged enough in subjects like history, geography, design technology, French and science. There is no requirement for the most able learners, or those who know more about a topic, to think harder or deal with the more complex ideas and concepts that would deepen their knowledge. Pupils are taught how to write in literacy, interpret data in mathematics and can use a range of computer packages to show their learning. However, they have few opportunities to make decisions as to how they showcase their knowledge in other subjects. Teachers usually decide how pupils should record learning, and this frequently limits the

length and quality of writing and does not allow pupils enough opportunities to use the key skills they have been taught across the wider curriculum

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children in the early years have more opportunities to read, write, count, use number and problem-solve, particularly in the outdoor learning environment
- pupils' writing in all subjects is as good as it is in English, so that they can apply the skills they have learned in English when writing across the curriculum
- they improve the challenge for higher-attaining pupils, particularly in mathematics and foundation subjects.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Croydon. 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 and subject leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority, scrutinised pupils' work in English, mathematics, and a range of subject/topic books. I visited lessons in the early years and key stages 1 and 2 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 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. 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.