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Jennifer Payne
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Dear Jennifer Payne

Short inspection of Smeeth Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 September 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 November 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.**

Since taking on the acting headteacher role last summer, you have taken appropriate steps to improve the school. You have rightly sought support to help you to do this. The local authority has provided robust and regular guidance. As a result, well-focused whole-school development plans are now in place. These have resulted in outcomes beginning to improve in key areas such as mathematics. Subject leaders are benefiting from regular work with colleagues across the locality. However, much of their leadership is at an early stage. Their actions are not yet having enough impact and are not sufficiently monitored or evaluated.

Some aspects of the provisional 2018 end-of-key-stage outcomes were above national averages, but overall, pupils' achievement was mixed. The proportion of pupils working at greater depth declined to below the national average. School information indicates high proportions of current pupils working at expected and greater depth standards. However, the standard of work in pupils' books does not reflect this information. Much of their work does not demonstrate the expected standards for their age, particularly in spelling and punctuation. Teachers' assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress are not accurate enough. Work across the wider curriculum does not demonstrate the development of the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding, particularly for the most able pupils.

It is often carelessly presented or unfinished. Expectations are too low, for the most able pupils in particular, and leaders are not yet doing enough to address this.

Governors have attended a range of appropriate training courses to help them in delivering their vision of a 'small school with big dreams'. They acknowledge that they too need continued support to ensure that this vision is delivered. Governors visit the school to check on progress in key areas. They have built strong relationships with parents through attending parent evenings and conducting their own questionnaires.

Leaders have maintained the strengths identified in the early years in the previous inspection. Children enjoy the plentiful learning opportunities provided. The environment is rich and stimulating. Adults provide learning opportunities which engage children well. As a result, they make good progress from their starting points. Proportions of children attaining a good level of development are consistently above those seen nationally.

Pupils and parents value the welcoming and friendly atmosphere of the school. Pupils are kind to each other. They support each other in their work and play. A pupil told me how the mentor scheme between older and younger pupils 'just checks in on them'. All parents who completed the Ofsted survey, Parent View, felt that their children were happy at school.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Staff know the school and the community well, and this allows them to spot when things are not as they should be.

Staff and governors are well trained in safeguarding and know the key factors that may put pupils at risk. They are especially vigilant regarding pupils' appropriate movement around the school site. This ensures that the challenges of safe movement between three buildings are managed well.

Pupils feel comfortable and confident about reporting any concerns to staff. They are appropriately aware of key aspects of keeping themselves safe, including online. All staff and parents who spoke to me or completed the Ofsted surveys felt pupils were safe at school.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we looked closely together at the provision for disadvantaged pupils. The information published on the school website about how the additional pupil premium funding is spent is not up to date. You are working with governors to ensure that this is rectified. However, you were able to describe the range of support in place for the very small number of disadvantaged pupils currently at the school. We could see how this support had helped pupils to make progress effectively.

- We also looked together at the effectiveness of the teaching of mathematics and writing, particularly in key stage 2. In the provisional 2018 end of key stage 2 national assessments in mathematics, the proportions of pupils attaining the expected and greater depth standards were below national averages. The subject leader has a clear vision for raising outcomes in mathematics. However, the translation of this vision into an action plan, followed by monitoring and analysing information, is at an early stage.
- Pupils' current work shows a recent improvement in developing mathematical reasoning. Where appropriate, pupils are developing secure mathematical understanding using practical work. Pupils are moving to more challenging work more quickly. As a result, outcomes are beginning to improve.
- While information about pupils' outcomes indicated writing standards to be high in relation to age-related expectations, this is not reflected in pupils' work in books. Too often, spelling choices are haphazard and basic punctuation is neglected. This lack of care is evident in writing across the curriculum.
- The new curriculum plans published on the website are comprehensive and detailed. However, the implementation of these is at an early stage. Work in pupils' books does not show learning that builds on previous tasks. As a result, knowledge and understanding are not fully developed, particularly for the most able pupils.
- We also looked together at leadership across the school. Staff are fully committed to the new leadership and vision of the school. All of those who completed the survey were proud to work there. They are excited by the development of their own leadership and growing in confidence along with their increased responsibility. Nevertheless, much of the subject leadership is at a very early stage and will need more support if these leaders are to drive the school forward in the way that is needed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leadership is developed so that leaders raise teachers' expectations across the curriculum, particularly, but not exclusively, for the most able pupils
- standards of pupils' presentation, punctuation and spelling are improved across the curriculum
- robust systems are in place to ensure teachers' assessments and the tracking of pupils' achievements are accurate.

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

Deborah Gordon
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met regularly with you. I also met with members of the local governing body, the local authority and some staff. I reviewed documentation including: information about pupils' achievement; the school improvement plan; and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. Together, we visited classes across the school. In lessons, I observed pupils learning, looked at their books and spoke to pupils about their work. I had a meeting with pupils to gather their views on the school. I took into account the views of parents I met in the playground, and considered 43 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the school's own survey information. I also considered five responses to the Ofsted staff survey and six responses to the pupil survey.