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Ruth Doughty
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Dear Ruth Doughty

Short inspection of Culverstone Green Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 18 October 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 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 provide highly effective and inspirational leadership for the school.

Since the previous inspection, there have been numerous unavoidable temporary staffing changes and last year the school moved into its new building. Throughout these significant disruptions, you have successfully maintained the quality of pupils' learning and their progress and have ensured that they continue to achieve well. One parent wrote: 'The school managed to maintain an excellent level of teaching and support for my child even though a major school build took place.'

You have created a strong senior leadership team that puts the needs of pupils first and shares your ambition and your aspirations. Together, you demonstrate a strong capacity to improve the school further. Senior leaders, staff, governors, parents and carers are very proud of the school and have every confidence in your leadership. You welcome pupils and their families from a diverse range of backgrounds, from the local community and further afield. There is a strong culture of inclusion and an unwavering commitment to meet the needs of all pupils. One parent commented: 'I cannot praise this school enough for how inclusive it is. The support they give is outstanding.'

As chief executive officer of The Pathway Academy Trust (TPAT) and a local leader of education, you divide your time between Culverstone Green and the other

schools in the trust. The head of school also shares her leadership role with another trust school. You work well together. There are mutually beneficial links between staff across the trust schools in terms of training, developing leadership skills, mentoring and sharing good practice. You have correctly identified that your new middle leaders will benefit from working collaboratively within the trust.

You are mindful of the issues identified as needing improvement from the previous inspection of your predecessor school. The actions you have taken to strengthen teaching in writing, for example, have led to pupils' improved achievement. Pupils enjoy writing. You, other leaders and governors conduct a range of monitoring activities that effectively and accurately identify the school's current strengths and areas for further development. You have recognised, for example, that, in spite of the improvements in writing, there is more to do to increase the proportion of pupils deepening their understanding across all curriculum subjects.

Pupils are nurtured at the school and thrive in a calm, orderly and caring environment. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and love coming to school. Pupils said that they really appreciate the space and learning opportunities in the new building. In their survey, all the pupils who responded said that the school encourages them to respect people from other backgrounds and to treat everyone equally. They demonstrated this during the inspection. Their behaviour is excellent: they are polite, friendly and show respect for each other and adults.

Pupils are enthusiastic in all they do, proud of their achievements and a credit to the school. Pupils were animated and articulate when talking about some of their experiences, for example learning through number games in mathematics, enterprise projects to raise funds and being buddies to children in the Reception Year. There are excellent relationships between pupils and teachers. As a result, pupils want to do well and work hard. They are not afraid to have a go, take risks and learn from their mistakes because they know that their efforts will be respected and valued by their teachers.

Parents are generally positive and supportive of the school. Many parents said that they appreciate the accessibility of staff and the care and support their children receive. One parent wrote: 'This school has real magic; there is a togetherness, dedication, spirit and love for our children that gives them and us confidence and a sense of belonging.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You, the trust and your governors have established a very strong culture of safeguarding in the school. There are very clear procedures in place and staff are vigilant in following these. The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff receive effective training on all the required aspects of safeguarding to keep pupils safe from a variety of risks, including those related to online activity. Staff and governors recognise that child protection is everyone's responsibility. You and the other trained designated safeguarding leads act swiftly when necessary and liaise well with other agencies to

ensure that pupils in need, and, where appropriate, their families, receive timely and effective support. You are resolute in following up concerns regarding the safety and well-being of pupils.

Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in school and that adults take good care of them. They are confident to talk to staff should any problems arise. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that the school keeps their children safe, they are happy and well looked after. One parent wrote, 'Culverstone Green Primary provides a nurturing environment in which my children feel safe and comfortable, which lets them focus their energy and attention on their learning.'

You have worked extremely hard to improve pupils' attendance, which was above the national figure last year. You and other leaders are resourceful and go the extra mile to support families, particularly where pupils are persistently absent. This has resulted in a dramatic reduction in the proportion of pupils with poor attendance.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at the following aspects of the school's work: the progress of disadvantaged pupils and how well the use of the pupil premium funding is monitored; how effectively leaders take action to address variations in pupils' achievement; pupils' achievement across the curriculum; and the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Leaders and governors have ensured that there are robust procedures to keep a check on the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to make sure that it is having an impact on their achievement. As a result of your carefully considered actions, current disadvantaged pupils in all year groups, including those who are most-able, are making strong progress.
- The profile of each year group varies significantly. Leaders look very carefully at the achievement and needs of all pupils and all groups in each year group, rather than looking for whole-school patterns and trends. This enables you to identify the priorities for each class and the next steps accordingly. For example, the current Reception class has 22 boys. Meeting their learning needs and their interests as well as those of the seven girls is challenging and you are focusing on providing more active learning opportunities. Children make good progress in the Reception class from starting points that are generally below those typical for their age.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in writing and mathematics and particularly strong progress in reading. In 2018, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standards for their ages was above the national average. The proportion who achieved greater depth or the higher standard was also above that found nationally, considerably so in reading and mathematics.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and designed to offer rich, interesting and inspiring opportunities for pupils. A wide range of enrichment activities make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development as well as their academic

skills. Your approach is to encourage and develop pupils' questioning and enquiry-based learning skills and you successfully develop pupils' curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Some subject leaders are very new to their roles. They have action plans, a passion for their subjects and a good awareness of the strengths and areas to improve. They have not been in post long enough to see the full impact of their work.

- The head of school and deputy headteacher are leading a current review of the curriculum. They have correctly acknowledged that the breadth of pupils' learning is not always matched with opportunities for its depth across all subjects. The progression in skills and knowledge is not always clear enough to build on and track their achievement.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in subjects other than English and mathematics, there is clearer progression in how pupils' knowledge and skills are built up over time so that the curriculum successfully further deepens and enriches pupils' learning
- subject leaders who are new to their roles have an even greater impact on the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes in their subjects through the collaborative opportunities within the trust.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the head of school and your senior leaders. I also met with other leaders in the school. I met with members of the governing body and the director of education of TPAT. You accompanied me on my visits to classes. During these visits, I spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at their work. I spoke to pupils around the school and in the playground and asked them for their views on the school. I examined work in pupils' books with senior leaders. I reviewed the school's website and sampled a range of documents and records, including: your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness; the school improvement plan; information about pupils' achievement; and documents relating to safeguarding. I took into account 109 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 50 free-text comments. I spoke with some parents in the playground at the start of the school day. I also considered 20 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 18 responses to the pupil survey.