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Ms Jacqueline Phelan
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Phelan

Short inspection of Carlton Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 January 2019, 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 January 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have addressed the key issues raised at the previous inspection. For example, leaders have made sure that staff develop pupils' spoken skills through promoting the precise use of spoken language and ensuring lots of opportunities for pupils to explain and justify their ideas.

You, the leadership team and a proactive and knowledgeable governing body have an accurate and honest understanding of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. From this, you have implemented effective strategies that have improved pupils' outcomes. Outcomes are improving each year, particularly at the end of the early years. By the end of key stage 2, pupils attain typically in line with national averages in reading and writing and ahead of national averages in mathematics.

Parents and carers are effusive in their praise of the school and your leadership. Pupils say that they enjoy their time at the school. Staff respond well to senior leadership. Speaking with me, and through their responses to Ofsted's survey, staff say that you and other senior colleagues are highly supportive. They appreciate the opportunities they are given to help improve their teaching and the opportunities they have to develop their professional careers.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has created a culture of safety and vigilance that is embedded across the school. Leaders have ensured that safeguarding policies and procedures

are in place and fit for purpose. Pre-employment checks on adults working at the school meet statutory requirements. All staff have regular and appropriate training. Staff who spoke with me were knowledgeable and understood how to respond to any concerns should they arise. Records are thorough and show that referrals are handled in a timely manner, leading to swift support for pupils who need it.

Parents and staff who responded to the online surveys all stated that pupils are happy, safe and well looked after at school. This view was echoed by the pupils who spoke with me during the inspection. They said they felt safe and were confident about what to do if they needed support. There is an openness described by staff and pupils where raising any concern is actively encouraged.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed three lines of enquiry. The first focused on the actions taken by leaders to ensure that pupils' attendance (including those who are persistently absent) is improving. This was because pupils' attendance has risen over time and levels of persistent absence have improved sharply over recent years.
- Leaders, including governors, have rightly prioritised improving attendance and have been more robust in developing systems that challenge low attendance and support families in addressing this issue.
- First-day phone calls, challenging unnecessary appointments and term-time leave, meetings with parents, home visits, penalty notices, and rewards for improved attendance have all secured an improvement in this area. As a result, attendance at the end of the last school year was broadly in line with the national average. Rates of persistent absence were lower than those found nationally.
- Although levels of persistent absence have reduced substantially, pupils' attendance so far this year is just below national expectations and the school accepts that this is still a priority for further improvement.
- The second line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve pupils' outcomes in reading. This was because, over the past three years, pupils made less progress and attained less well by the end of Year 6 in this area than they did in writing and mathematics.
- The leadership of reading is strong. Leaders are highly committed to ensuring that pupils achieve their best. Leaders have supported teachers well in developing their knowledge and confidence through a range of professional development opportunities. As a result, pupils across the school can talk with confidence about the texts they read and authors' use of language, and pupils are beginning to make more complex inferences about characters and plot.
- Pupils who read to me were motivated readers who read widely, frequently and were familiar with a range of authors and their work. Pupils read with confidence, expression and intonation. They demonstrated a good understanding of the texts.
- On my visits to lessons with leaders, I saw that pupils are exposed to a range of

literature that extends their vocabulary and understanding of sentence structure. Some teachers use questioning effectively when asking pupils to reflect on the texts they read. As a result, many pupils are able to justify their opinions and understanding of the text, using increasingly appropriate evidence to back up their views.

- Teachers do not always challenge pupils to use richer vocabulary or to explain more abstract and demanding concepts. This sometimes limits pupils, particularly the most able pupils, in securing even better outcomes. During visits to lessons, some groups of pupils who work independently of the teacher were not always fully focused. As a result, the amount of time they spend reading is diminished and learning time is lost.
- The final line of enquiry focused on the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve the progress made by the most able pupils in reading and writing across key stage 2. This was because these pupils have made slower progress than other pupils in recent years.
- Visits to lessons, analysis of pupils' work and discussions with pupils demonstrate that pupils readily accept the challenges presented to them. Pupils' demonstrate a mature attitude to collaborative learning, even when the work is most difficult, supporting and challenging their peers to share ideas and explain their thinking.
- Leaders have started work on heightening pupils' awareness of the component skills that effective readers need. Where this has been most successful, pupils' verbal explanations of literary concepts and strategies are detailed, and they increasingly use precise vocabulary with accuracy.
- Work in pupils' books demonstrates that the English curriculum covers a broad range of genre. There is logical development of the different skills that contribute to writing. As a result, pupils' stamina for writing and increasing technical accuracy generally improve over time.
- However, sometimes, teachers do not recognise when the most able pupils are ready to move on. As a result, pupils sometimes repeat work that they have already demonstrated they have achieved. In some books, misconceptions that have been identified are not addressed. This hinders the progress of some of the most able writers and technical errors persist in their written work.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use assessment information consistently to make sure that pupils' misconceptions are acted upon swiftly and that pupils are challenged sufficiently in their learning
- teachers make sure that independent reading activities are well planned so that all groups of pupils are supported to make strong progress
- the initiatives designed to reduce persistent absence are embedded fully to further improve pupils' attendance.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Turvey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection began with a discussion of the school's self-evaluation and we agreed the key lines of enquiry. Together, we visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. I listened to a group of pupils reading, spoke to them about their learning and discussed how the school helps to keep them safe. Meetings were held with those responsible for leading reading, writing, safeguarding and attendance. I met a group of governors and the school improvement consultant. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan and single central record of employment checks. I considered the responses to the staff survey, pupil survey and Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.