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Dear Mrs Eggleston

Short inspection of Lydden Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 February 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 February 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You and your staff continue to strive to develop the most effective provision for the pupils. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school and they value the care and support their children receive. You share your ambitions for the school very effectively with the staff and they have risen to the challenge you have set them. You have established a successful federation to provide additional support for your small school to develop further. As a result, pupils are making strong progress across all key stages and are well prepared for the next steps in their education.

This is a happy school where pupils enjoy learning and taking part in school life. They are universally positive about their experiences in school and they take delight in sharing their favourite topics and subjects. The school is a stimulating environment with rich and vivid displays that showcase pupils' work well. Pupils rarely miss school and are reluctant to depart at the end of the day. You have developed a high degree of independence in your pupils. They are proud to share their mistakes and show how they have improved their work. Pupils work very well together and enjoy testing each other with challenging questions. As a result, pupils are confident, articulate and cheerful learners.

Parents are very pleased with the school and are very positive about your leadership. They value the willingness of staff to 'go the extra mile' and one parent commented, 'The school couldn't have done any more to support my son'. Parents

described a key strength of the school as the support pupils receive when they face challenges or obstacles, such as bereavement or family break up. You and your leaders are approachable and keen to solve any concerns quickly. Parents are committed to the school and, in the past year, have raised funds for theatre trips, circus workshops and caterpillars (to observe become butterflies) for every class.

You have maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection. Pupils' attainment at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 is above the national average. Most pupils exceed or reach the expected standards for their age. Pupils achieve especially well in writing in both key stages and, in key stage 2, pupils have made very strong progress over the past three years. Children get a very strong start in the early years and are well prepared for key stage 1. However, you rapidly tackled the slight dip in achievement in mathematics in 2017. As a result, pupils at the end of key stage 2 made stronger progress from their starting points in 2018.

You have addressed the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. As a result of precision teaching and a systematic whole-school approach, pupils are writing with more accuracy than in the past. Pupils' attainment in writing across all key stages is now a strength of the school. Pupils are also much more confident in solving problems and explaining their reasoning when carrying out investigations. This is especially the case in mathematics, where pupils relish justifying their answers and outlining how they came to the solutions. Pupils see making mistakes as a key part of learning and, as a result, are quick to self-correct without prompting. Consequently, pupils make strong progress, and this is especially the case for the most able.

Safeguarding is effective.

The nurture of all pupils is at the heart of the school's work. Staff, parents and pupils who completed the Ofsted questionnaire agreed that pupils are well cared for, safe and happy at school. Attendance is high and above the national average. There are good systems in place to ensure that pupils who suffer anxiety or illness are well catered for. Pupils who join the school mid-phase are also well supported. There is an explicit drive to develop pupils' well-being and confidence. This approach is especially effective for those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

The systems and procedures in place to keep children safe are thorough and robust. There is appropriate training for all staff, including those with additional responsibilities. Leaders and governors scrutinise and test this aspect of the school's work frequently. The school's safeguarding policy is appropriate and up to date. Staff, volunteers and governors receive regular training and, as a result, are confident about what to do if they have worries about a pupil. Concerns are acted upon and followed up without delay.

Inspection findings

- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check was just below the national average in 2018. You have reviewed your approach to supporting pupils in Year 2 and ensured that staff new to the school receive effective support. As a result, more pupils are on track to achieve the expected standard this academic year. In key stage 2, you have introduced a new systematic approach to develop spelling. Pupils enjoy working together with their spelling partners and are making good progress. Pupils and parents reported the difference the new approach is making to pupils' spelling. Pupils are especially keen on how the new approach gives them specific strategies to remember new words 'weeks' after they have learned them. Pupils' books show that they are more confident in using challenging vocabulary in their writing and can self-correct more frequently as they write.
- Pupils attain well in mathematics. In 2018, a greater proportion of pupils attained the expected standard than the national average at the end of key stage 2. However, the progress these pupils made from their starting points was less strong than you had hoped. The cohort in 2018 had achieved especially well at the end of key stage 1. However, fewer pupils than you anticipated exceeded the expected standard. You and your leaders have reflected on the curriculum in mathematics and have introduced significant changes. Teachers have incorporated more challenging practice into their numeracy lessons. Pupils can now explain why they use different methods to solve problems and can justify their answers. In key stage 2, the most able pupils are testing their reasoning skills on each other with problems they have created, as a result of very effective teaching. Pupils use the school's assessment system skilfully to improve their work and gain a greater understanding of key concepts. As a result, pupils' mathematics books show that in key stage 2 they are attempting more challenging work with significant success.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve the expected standards at the end of key stage 2. You acknowledge that a few of these pupils do not make as strong progress as others in the school. Consequently, you have reviewed the support for these pupils. You have made good use of research and the practice in other local schools to review how you meet the needs of these pupils. The new systems are making a difference and there is emerging evidence that these pupils are making stronger progress than before. Governors are challenging and passionate in their scrutiny of leaders' work to support disadvantaged pupils. They hold you to account very effectively.
- You are rightly ambitious for your pupils to succeed. You have identified that pupils in your small school need additional help to develop their independence and resilience. This is especially the case for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, you have introduced a new curriculum which is more aspirational and outward looking than in the past. Pupils are increasingly showing more independence in how they learn. They relish working together or in small groups on topics that they have helped shape. They especially enjoy learning about aspects of life,

such as the Chinese New Year, that are not common to their locality. Staff are proud of the work they have done to develop these new approaches. However, they are at an early stage of development. Additional adults are also working to develop their knowledge and understanding of the new topics. You have identified this as an area of development for your staff and this is especially the case for those adults who are supporting disadvantaged pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop the curriculum so that all pupils achieve well, and that disadvantaged pupils make as strong progress as others by the end of key stage 2.

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

Seamus Murphy
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your assistant head of school, members of the governing body, staff and a representative from the local authority. I reviewed documentation, including safeguarding checks, policies, minutes of meetings, procedures and school planning documentation. I visited all the classes in the school with you and spoke to pupils about their work. We reviewed a sample of pupils' books, both in and outside of lessons. I met with 15 pupils at breaktime to get their views of the school. I took account of parents' views by speaking to them on the playground after school, and considered the 17 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including the free-text responses. I also considered the 32 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the 13 responses to the staff questionnaire.