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Mr Anthony Carmel
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Carmel

Short inspection of Ashmount Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 29 September 2015 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 April 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection while the school has experienced a number of significant changes. Leaders have successfully managed the school's expansion and move into its new building located in Crouch Hill Park. You joined the school in September 2014 as the new headteacher. Since then, you and the governors have restructured the leadership team and reorganised the governing body.

Pupils are proud of the new school buildings. The school site is well maintained and litter- and graffiti-free. Displays around the school show the range of interesting activities that promote pupils' learning, including specialist music teaching. Older pupils are keen to take on caring roles as playground friends, helping the younger ones at breaktime. You have increased the recreation equipment that is available for pupils in Key Stage 2 to use at breaktime, and made changes to the way this time is organised. Pupils confirm that these changes have helped to make sure breaktimes are calm and orderly.

You make sure that the best teachers share their effective practice with their colleagues. This has helped to maintain the teaching consistency across the school. Teachers often set tasks at different levels of difficulty, in order to challenge pupils

and to help them deepen their knowledge and understanding. As a result, pupils continue to make strong progress as they move through the school.

At the previous inspection, inspectors found there was more work to do to make sure pupils know how to improve their work. Leaders have successfully taken effective action to tackle this. Teachers make clear what key skills pupils need to learn and, in turn, pupils take responsibility for checking their work to see if they have been successful. Teachers give good-quality feedback on pupils' work. Clear learning aims on 'bookmarks' attached to pupils' exercise books, help them to check what they need to do next.

Children in the early years continue to achieve well because the strengths identified at the last inspection have been sustained. For example, teachers plan interesting indoor and outdoor activities that capture and hold children's attention and enthusiasm. Adults support children's learning through high-quality discussions that encourage them to think hard.

Leaders have made sure that early reading and phonics (the link between sounds and letters) are taught well. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has increased year on year. Provisional results suggest it was well above the national average in the most recent check.

The last inspection found that middle leaders and governors were not always making the best use of information to check pupils' achievement. Since then, governors have made sure they are trained to compare the school's performance information with the national picture. They use this information to check how well pupils are doing. They have challenged you to provide them with more detailed information about the impact of the pupil premium funding. However, they are not systematically checking the progress of other pupils during the school year.

As a result of sharper use of performance information, phase and subject leaders have made sure that all pupils who need to catch up are given additional support. This demonstrates leaders' capacity to secure improvements. In 2014, the progress of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 who needed to catch up was too slow. The leadership team has addressed this and the impact is clear. In 2015, provisional results suggest that gaps in progress rates closed and disadvantaged pupils made similar progress to other pupils nationally.

The leadership team have put in place robust procedures to increase rates of attendance. You have made your high expectations of attendance abundantly clear to the whole school community. For example, you acknowledge classes with the best attendance and celebrate pupils who attend regularly each term. Pupils know the importance of not missing valuable learning time because leaders remind them regularly that 'every minute matters, every second counts'. Staff follow up all

absences rigorously. Attendance rates have risen since the last inspection but are still not above average.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have made sure that staff receive regular up-to-date safeguarding guidance. Recent training has included sessions on how to recognise possible warning signs that pupils may be at risk of radicalisation or female genital mutilation. Pupils are confident that the adults will help them should any problems arise. Personal safety advice for pupils on a wide range of subjects, including how to make strong passwords when using computers or how to cross the road safely, helps pupils to feel safe and secure.

The leadership team has made sure that all safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements and are fit for purpose. Record-keeping is suitably detailed and of high quality.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's overall performance. As the school increases in size, they are ambitious to build on its current successes in order to secure further improvements quickly. Action planning is detailed and the impact of key initiatives is monitored effectively. Senior, phase and subject leaders regularly check the progress of all groups of pupils across the school. Governors have increased their skills in understanding information about pupils' performance in national tests.
- You rightly identified the performance of disadvantaged pupils as a key priority since you joined the school. You have made sure that the pupil premium funding is used to provide a wide variety of support for eligible pupils. The impact this has had in closing gaps in academic achievement has been successful. The school's performance information for pupils currently on roll at the school shows that disadvantaged pupils made similar progress compared with other pupils at the school. Together with members of the governing body, you are determined to make sure that the funding secures the best possible outcomes for pupils that provide value for money. Governors have demanded greater analysis of the impact of each initiative funded by the premium, in order to challenge you to secure even better outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. However, they do not always check the progress of all pupils in the school as systematically or as thoroughly as they should.
- The leadership team has identified that pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics is stronger than in writing. Initiatives to encourage pupils to write regularly each week and to practise their writing skills across a range of subjects have been well chosen. However, leaders have not made sure that handwriting is taught consistently throughout the school so that pupils develop fluent

handwriting. As a result, few Key Stage 2 pupils write with a pen and are not helped to present their work as neatly as they could.

- You have introduced changes to the structure of the leadership team. The strongest teachers have responsibilities for securing the overall quality of teaching within their areas of responsibility. Coaching and mentoring have successfully secured improvements to teaching last year. Well-led initiatives have made sure that pupils know their personal targets and what the next steps are in their learning. This year, with the high number of new staff joining the school, sustaining the consistency of teaching across the school rightly remains an ongoing key priority.
- Pupils confirm that leaders make their expectations of behaviour clear. They say that unkind behaviour, such as name-calling, is tackled effectively by the staff. Extra recreation equipment for pupils to use at breaktime and staggering the times that different classes use the playground are helping to maintain pupils' good behaviour as the school expands.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should make sure that:

- pupils are encouraged to develop neat and fluent handwriting
- governors check the progress of all pupils systematically over the course of the school year.

Yours sincerely

Madeleine Gerard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met you, the deputy headteacher, four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. I visited classes in all year groups from Nursery to Year 6 to observe teaching and looked at pupils' work. I spoke to pupils in lessons and around the school at break and lunchtime and also met a small group of Key Stage 2 pupils. I evaluated the school's most recent information on pupils' progress. Records about keeping pupils safe and attendance were scrutinised. I also considered the responses of 60 parents to the online questionnaire, Parent View.