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22 March 2016

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Dear Mrs Eades

Short inspection of Sunnymede Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 11 February 2016, 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 2010.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have ensured that your vision for happy and confident pupils who enjoy their learning continues to be at the heart of the school. Through your clear direction, your leadership team have the capacity to keep improving the school. This is because you all have the skills and also the determination that all pupils can succeed. The vast majority of parents comment on how approachable you are, and how carefully you and your team consider the best approach to meet the needs of their children, particularly those who have special educational needs or disability.

Members of the governing body know the school well. They regularly visit to assure themselves that pupils are well cared for and are experiencing good-quality learning opportunities. They check the spending of additional funds, such as the pupil premium and sports funding, thoroughly. Governors assure themselves that these funds are spent in the most effective way to improve the outcomes for eligible pupils.

The school's values are threaded through all aspects of school life. Pupils learn about friendship, determination, excellence, courage and respect, and then are eager to put these qualities into practice in their learning. In a celebration assembly for parents, the pupils readily explained how their learning about Chinese New Year linked with the school values of respect when thinking about other cultures.

Pupils are proud of their school and treat their very attractive environment with care and respect. Displays around the school show the broad and engaging curriculum on offer to the pupils. You and your leaders make sure that planned themed weeks, such as Chinese New Year, visitors and external visits enhance the experience of pupils even further and capture their interests.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils behave in a way that demonstrates they feel cared for and safe. Adults are well trained and use their skills consistently well to ensure that pupils know and follow the routines and high expectations of good conduct throughout the school day. At lunchtime, friendships and enjoyment are clearly evident. There are many activities for pupils to enjoy, such as skipping and organised games of football. This is a happy school where disagreements and behaviour issues are rare.

At the last inspection, inspectors asked you to improve teaching. This you have tackled rigorously. Through offering staff high-quality training opportunities, together with robust monitoring and effective performance management systems, you have ensured that teaching is strong across the school. Teachers in all classes successfully plan learning to meet the different needs of pupils in English and mathematics. As a result, the achievement of pupils by the end of Key Stage 1 remains high, often significantly above national expectations. Pupils are well prepared for their move to junior school.

You use the skills of the support staff creatively to enhance pupils' understanding further. The support you offer for pupils with disability and those who have special educational needs is very much a strength. The staff who provide individual or small-group sessions are well trained and skilful in helping pupils make the progress of which they are capable. As a result, these pupils make very good and often exceptional progress from their individual starting points.

You have rightly recognised the need to increase the proportion of pupils who leave the Reception Year having gained at least a good level of development, so that they are better prepared for Year 1. Children enter the school with individual skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age. Teaching in the early years is strong, and teachers plan exciting opportunities for children to learn and choose across all the areas of learning. Children are confident and happy, and are developing an enjoyment of learning as a result.

Safeguarding is effective.

The high level of care given to pupils by all staff enables them to feel safe at school. Parents agree that their children are kept safe during the school day.

You ensure that all the necessary safeguarding checks are in place and that policies are up to date with the latest statutory requirements. Records are meticulously kept and adults provide exceptionally well for the safeguarding of pupils. Governors robustly monitor the safeguarding policies and practices in the school, so they can hold school leaders to account for the safeguarding of pupils.

Adults openly help pupils to develop strategies for keeping safe when using online technology. Consequently, pupils can talk maturely about how to identify risks and what actions they take to alleviate them. They are confident that adults will help them if they are concerned.

Records show that staff are appropriately and regularly trained to recognise and report child protection concerns. Documentary evidence shows that referrals of concerns to other agencies are handled in a timely and tenacious way.

Inspection findings

- In the last inspection report, inspectors praised the school for many aspects of its work, especially your self-evaluation and monitoring of teaching and learning. This good work you have continued as a leadership team. You have also maintained high levels of care for the pupils. As a result, adults and pupils have very good relationships, which remain a strength of the school.
- You were asked to improve the feedback given to pupils, so they know how to improve their work. This you have achieved. Teachers ensure that they follow the school's policy on feedback and marking, particularly in English and mathematics. Pupils clearly understand the school's method and respond to the comments given to them. They can explain what they need to do to improve their writing and their mathematical understanding.
- You and your senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governors are supportive of the school's work and share your aspiration to continue to improve the standard of education for the pupils at Sunnymede. The governors assist you by overseeing the management of teachers' performance with rigour.
- The governing body supports the school well through regular visits. Governors check and challenge school leaders to satisfy themselves that children and pupils are safe, and that financial resources are well used. However, documents show that they rely on your advice to understand the published information regarding the progress and standard of education across the school. You are aware that they do not ask enough questions about pupils' progress to assure themselves of this strategic aspect of their work.
- Teaching is strong across the school. Teachers carefully plan learning that interests pupils and enables them to develop their reading, writing and mathematical ability. Pupils are encouraged to write with increasing precision. This is because teachers ensure they practise spelling and grammar through a wide range of activities. For example, in a small group, some pupils were first practising their spelling words and then independently writing sentences to apply their newfound knowledge. Boys and girls were equally motivated to achieve.
- The teachers in the early years have received quality training and take every opportunity to develop the children's phonetical and mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding. In one lesson seen, most children were able to count out their numbers to 20, miss out a digit, and start and stop at differing points. This was because the teacher clearly explained the activity and modelled her expectations carefully. The children were rightly proud of their achievement.

- Since the last inspection, you have responded well to Ofsted's request to expand the pupils' understanding of different cultures. You and your leaders have organised the curriculum so that topics interest and excite pupils. Pupils learn and experience a much broader range of cultural celebrations than previously. They immerse themselves in learning about different places around the world, speaking maturely and respectfully about people who may live in other parts of this country or the rest of the world.
- Pupils are extremely polite and well mannered. In class, they work well together in groups, pairs or individually and have a love of learning. Consequently, lessons proceed without the need for a reminder or correction. Pupils' contributions are often applauded by their peers. In one lesson, a young child was very proud to hear his own recording of him recalling the facts he had learned about China.
- Leaders use the small amounts of pupil premium funding effectively. Disadvantaged pupils receive extra-curricular lessons within school. Staff skilfully deepen their vocabulary and experience so these pupils can make accelerated progress. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils achieve standards similar to other pupils nationally by the time they leave school at the end of Year 2.
- Pupils achieve very well during their time at Sunnymede. This is because systems and processes to help children and pupils learn to read, write and understand number are well established. The proportion who achieve the expected standard by the time they reach the end of Year 2 is significantly above the national average for their age. The vast majority of parents recognise the effective work of the school and the often exceptional progress their children make. Parents wholeheartedly recommend the school.
- You are aware that at times the more-able pupils are not sufficiently challenged in subjects such as science. Open-ended tasks that help pupils think and explore are not used well enough. The planning of learning does not always include enough opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their mastery of literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. This results in a few pupils not achieving the very best in all subjects.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Staff raise the achievement of children in early years, so the proportion who achieve a good level of development is consistently above national expectations for their age
- Teachers apply the same high expectations of what the more-able pupils can achieve in all subjects, as well as English and mathematics
- Teachers give more opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills across all curriculum subjects, to make maximum use of the engaging curriculum
- Governors develop a greater understanding of the assessment information of the school, so they can ask challenging questions about pupils' progress and the strategic direction of the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Essex County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, senior and middle leaders and governors. I visited the classes and spoke with pupils and staff, as well as looking at pupils' work in books and on display. I observed pupils at lunchtime and in after-school activities. I considered the school's approach to gathering and analysing assessment information and the progress that pupils are currently making. Safeguarding records and information about keeping pupils safe were evaluated. The views of parents were collected from the responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and from speaking with them informally after a celebration assembly.