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Dear Mrs Wood

Short inspection of Falkland Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 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 February 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Despite only joining the school in January 2016, you are already well respected by staff and parents for your openness and visible leadership. You are rightly ambitious for the pupils in your care and highly driven to improve the quality of provision at Falkland. Governors and staff support your aims and together you have started to have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

Pupils are confident, polite and understanding of each other. They recognise that some pupils find it difficult to manage their behaviour on occasion, but say that 'we can all learn from our mistakes'. Pupils are proud to explain their learning and readily share ideas. This pride is also evident in their well-presented written work. Pupils appreciate the wide range of opportunities that school offers them. In particular, they highlight their many competitive successes, apparent in the overflowing trophy cabinet, in sports such as swimming, football, basketball, athletics and netball. Supporting pupils' personal development is clearly a strength of the school. Pupils can explain the importance of fundraising activities for charities such as Children in Need and Cancer Research. Some pupils showed they understand the value of money, appreciating that the school offers 'affordable trips'. Pupils are encouraged to have high aspirations. After a recent science and engineering week, one pupil has decided to become 'a scientist and Prime Minister'.

Pupils' achievement is good. For the past three years, the proportion of children leaving the early years well prepared for Year 1 has been above the national average. This year, more children have reached a good level of development so that the very large majority are now ready for Year 1. After a slight dip in 2015, this year most pupils met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds they make) check as they had done in previous years. At the end of key stage 1, most pupils this year have met the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Current pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is above the national average in most subjects. Nevertheless, you have rightly identified the need to increase pupils' attainment in writing in key stage 2 so that it is also above the national average.

Leaders and governors have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection:

- Girls' achievement in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 is now more consistent with that of boys. Boys and girls, including the most able pupils, are making similarly good progress in mathematics. In the most recent Year 6 mathematics assessments, girls' attainment is above that of boys.
- Teaching continues to improve. Phonics teaching is consistent so that most pupils acquire this important knowledge by the end of Year 1. Teachers are increasingly making use of checks on pupils' learning in lessons to adjust their teaching.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have reviewed and refined safeguarding procedures so that there is a culture of vigilance. Work to keep pupils safe is responsive. For example, the acting deputy headteacher recently identified the need to make pupils and parents aware of how to stay safe on the internet. To address this, she set up special workshops to help them find out more. All staff have up-to-date training to an appropriate level so they know what to do if they are worried about a pupil. This includes awareness of radicalisation. The school's emotional literacy support assistant works closely with vulnerable pupils to build confidence and social skills for those who could be at risk of isolation or need extra support. The safeguarding governor is knowledgeable and works closely with senior leaders to ensure that work to keep pupils safe meets current requirements and is effective.

Pupils' attendance is above the national average. You recognise that some groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have absence rates slightly above their classmates. Therefore, you are working closely with the local authority to challenge and support families to achieve improvements. Bullying and discrimination are rare. Almost all pupils say that staff will help if they have a problem. Consequently, parents, pupils and staff say that pupils are safe and well looked after at school.

Inspection findings

- Since you started at the school, you have worked closely with the local authority and governors to establish an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You have wasted no time, making the best use of this knowledge to make essential improvements to teaching and learning. For example, you recognised the need to strengthen teachers' use of accurate assessments of pupils' learning to provide effective challenge and support for pupils, particularly in mathematics. Drawing on helpful support from local authority advisors, you have ensured that teachers have made the changes and this has led to better rates of progress in mathematics, particularly across key stage 2.
- You have promoted close working relationships between staff so that they learn together. Staff agree that leaders have created a climate for teachers that supports their professional development. Teachers are proactive and increasingly confident to refine their practice. For example, some are applying the new approach to mathematics assessment to their teaching of writing. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.
- The governing body is very effective. Governors are reflective and review their work, making changes to increase their impact where necessary. Governors have clear long-term plans and oversee the current improvement plans, checking that work supports their aims, is on track and is effective. They keep a close eye on pupils' progress information and use this wherever they can to hold senior leaders to account. As a result, governors have ensured that the previous areas for improvement have been met.
- Phonics teaching is consistent across Year 1 and Reception classes so that pupils achieve well. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, high expectations of pupils and set them challenging work. For example, in a Year 1 class the teacher ensured that pupils understood the 'ey' sound at the end of monkey. One pupil sounded out each letter separately. The teacher used sound buttons and gently corrected the pupil's response so that he understood that the two letters made just one sound.
- Children's attainment in writing in the early years has improved because teachers are increasingly challenging children to write well. Children work with the teacher to write sentences about topics of interest. Their written work shows that they write at increasing length and use their phonics well to spell words. Some recent writing about the beach used description and precise vocabulary such as 'pier' and 'picnic'. One child wrote, 'the waves are crashing'. Although there are some opportunities for children to practise this skill outside, outdoor activities are not yet as demanding as they are in the classroom. This does not enable children to make outstanding progress.
- Pupils' English books show that pupils develop key skills and apply them to their writing. This includes drafting and refining their writing so that it has a greater effect on the reader. However, opportunities for pupils to practise writing across the curriculum are not consistent and do not provide the same

high level of challenge seen in pupils' English books.

- Teaching in mathematics is increasingly focused on developing pupils' abilities to reason using appropriate vocabulary. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, the teacher provided pupils with lots of opportunities to explain their thinking. When pupils shared their ideas, the teacher showed high expectations of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, by ensuring that they used the correct vocabulary such as 'quadrants' and 'rotation'. Furthermore, in a Year 3 lesson, pupils were encouraged to make links, bringing together known facts to solve problems such as 'how many days are in a year?' Pupils enjoy these lessons and say that they like finding things out for themselves. Consequently, pupils from all groups are making good progress in mathematics.
- There is highly effective leadership of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The intervention leader has established strong systems to identify pupils at risk of underachievement and has ensured that teachers plan and deliver a range of actions to address pupils' individual needs. Parents and pupils are rightly involved in this, shaping this support through meetings, 'pupil passports' and 'target reviews'. The leader regularly checks the impact of extra support and helps teachers to make adjustments where necessary. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress.
- You rightly recognised that provision for disadvantaged pupils is not as effective as that for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Across the school, the relatively small number of disadvantaged pupils are making less consistent progress than others and there are still gaps between their attainment and that of their classmates. Therefore, you have wisely extended the role of the inclusion leader to implement the same system of support for disadvantaged pupils. This work is underway but not yet complete.
- The curriculum is interesting for pupils and promotes a wide range of skills and knowledge. Topics such as 'Saxons', 'Romans' and 'Mexico' capture pupils' imagination. Pupils talk enthusiastically about salsa making and rehearsing Roman battle techniques. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is also well promoted. Pupils say that they learn to respect others through religious education lessons that cover a range of different beliefs. In a recent culture week, based on Japan, Year 5 pupils researched and taught lessons to other pupils to share their learning. One pupil spoke with the wisdom of her recent experience saying, 'It's tough being a teacher.'

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide consistently challenging opportunities for pupils to develop their writing across the curriculum

- outdoor activities in the early years are challenging for children
- work to develop highly effective provision for disadvantaged pupils continues so that gaps between them and their classmates close.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Dulon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, the acting deputy headteacher, the inclusion leader, the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I visited six classes, including two jointly with you, to look at teaching and learning. I looked at pupils' work in their exercise books. While observing playtime, I spoke informally to a group of pupils. I took into account responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as speaking to a number of parents at the end of the school day. I also considered responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires. I evaluated a range of documents, including pupils' progress information and safeguarding policies, procedures and checks.