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28 November 2016

Miss Sophia Pardalis
Limes Farm Junior School
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Dear Miss Pardalis

Short inspection of Limes Farm Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 8 November 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 January 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your enthusiastic leadership and unwavering expectations have ensured that the school has gone from strength to strength. You lead through your school motto, 'achieving is believing'. You value the contribution that staff make and encourage them to play an active role in moving the school forward. You ensure that leadership is delegated effectively so that all staff play a pivotal role in the school's performance. Consequently, staff are very proud to work at Limes Farm Junior School.

You have created a culture of trust and transparency with pupils and parents that helps you to communicate well with them. You and your staff know your pupils and the community very well. Your working partnerships with parents are positive. Your staff team works incredibly hard to make sure that no pupil feels left out. Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about their school experience and celebrate the differences that make them each unique. The head girl and head boy carry out frequent pupil surveys. They say that 'the school really helps children to improve their confidence and self-esteem. We are all treated the same and it doesn't matter if you speak a different language or believe in something different, the school thinks we are special no matter what.'

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the difference marking and feedback has on pupils' progress and also to provide more challenging activities for

the most able pupils. You have taken appropriate action to address these aspects. Inspection evidence, looking at work in pupils' books and the school's current progress and attainment information, shows that what you are doing is making a difference and, despite some pupils having low starting points, pupils are achieving better outcomes.

You ensured that staff had an early and thorough understanding of the new national curriculum. As a result, the curriculum and assessment systems are now well embedded within the school. Leaders use this assessment information effectively to review the progress being made by different groups of pupils and individuals across a range of subjects. Staff are able to support pupils who are falling behind to catch up quickly. Most notably, this work is contributing to the improving progress of disadvantaged pupils.

The school has gone from strength to strength since its previous inspection. Your resolute belief that teaching is a consistently strong focus is securing effective teaching and learning. It is due to positive, transparent working relationships with the neighbouring infant school and rigorous monitoring and evaluation that the starting points for pupils are meticulously checked and verified as accurate. The progress pupils make is improving and is ensuring that pupils leave the school achieving at least the expected national standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Despite the school having many strengths, you, the governors and your team do not stand still but continue to review your work to provide an even better provision for all pupils.

The school environment is attractive, thought-provoking and exudes fun and inspiration. Teachers take great care in creating classrooms that provide prompts to help pupils with their day-to-day work. Leaders have developed outdoor areas that provide a similarly stimulating environment to that found indoors.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and governors have nurtured a culture and environment in which safeguarding underpins the school's work and pupils are kept safe.

You ensure that all staff and governors participate in regular training in all aspects of safeguarding, including how to support the prevention of radicalisation and extremism. Staff use this training effectively and make appropriate referrals. Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, including their attendance, are monitored meticulously. Timely, suitable action is taken to address any issues or concerns. This includes working with external agencies when necessary. Staff record incidents precisely and leaders act on any issues appropriately. As a result, all potential risks are assessed and minimised, and pupils are well cared for.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Parents and staff agree. Pupils confidently explain what they would do in a range of situations to keep themselves safe. The curriculum plays a positive role in helping pupils learn how to keep safe, for example from cyber bullying or misuse of social media. Pupils knowledgeably talk

about staying safe online. Pupils also say that behaviour is good. They feel confident approaching any adult in the school as they know that staff will alleviate their concern. Pupils both acknowledge and value their diversity. They take pride in helping each other to feel comfortable and happy at school. One pupil said, 'It's about caring about each other no matter what year you are in and looking out for each other. Sometimes even we need help even though we are the oldest children here.'

Inspection findings

- You have supported new leaders to quickly become effective in their roles. Consequently, leaders' evaluation of the quality of the school's provision is accurate and insightful. As a result, leaders act swiftly to evaluate provision so that it always makes a positive difference to the pupils' achievement.
- You have worked hard to embed a rigorous system for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment which improves the quality of pupils' learning. As a result, teachers know the pupils well and have a very perceptive overview of their needs. Teachers know pupils' starting points and use this information to good effect in their planning and in how additional adults are deployed most effectively to support pupils' learning.
- The 2016 unvalidated results show that the percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading and writing is in line with the national expectation, and above in mathematics. This is an improving picture over time and is as a result of leaders' relentless focus on accurately identified school priorities.
- Your focus on reading is making a real difference to pupils' enjoyment and achievement in reading. Pupils who read to me on an individual basis attempted unfamiliar words with confidence, using a thorough understanding of phonics. You have invested in high-quality texts that interest pupils and encourage them to read more. Leaders' monitoring of reading across the school shows that pupils accurately apply their reading skills in a range of contexts.
- Your staff are increasingly giving the most able pupils more challenging activities so that they are beginning to make more rapid progress. For example, in a set of books, while some Year 3 pupils were learning about capacity measures in mathematics, a few pupils who had demonstrated that they knew this knowledge were moved on to applying mass using kilograms and grams and problem-solving.
- Your team ensures that pupils are well prepared and given extensive opportunities in the curriculum to succeed. The curriculum and teaching support pupils to develop deep understanding of key topics. However, there are occasions when pupils do not apply this knowledge as precisely as they could. Consequently, more of them could make quicker progress from their various starting points.
- You have improved the quality of teachers' feedback since the previous

inspection so that it now enables pupils to act upon it effectively. Across the school, teachers use consistent approaches that provide valuable support for all pupils. For example, you and your team have devised non-negotiables in reading, writing and mathematics, and a 'what makes handwriting good' checklist that pupils frequently use to check their work. This results in consistently high expectations being promoted at all times, and consequently the standard and presentation of all pupils' work are good and demonstrate that pupils take pride in what they do.

- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points in reading and mathematics. You assess what they can do and consider carefully how to use the additional government funding so that it best meets these pupils' specific needs. Leaders deploy additional help to meet pupils' needs, particularly to improve their achievement in writing. Leaders' focus on this is ensuring that disadvantaged pupils' progress, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, is improving.
- The increasing proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Leaders' precise assessments of pupils when they first enter the school support teachers to plan appropriate activities which support these pupils' learning.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well from their varying starting points. Aside from their academic needs, the care and well-being of their sometimes complex needs is a strength of your school. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics because all adults think about what 'extra' they need in addition to their classroom provision. Staff work closely together to plan the pupils' provision, befitting their needs.
- Leaders prioritise the monitoring of attendance and methodically investigate the reasons for some pupils' persistent absence. Additional strategies to improve attendance have been implemented and, as a result, in 2016 attendance levels have improved rapidly.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils want to do well and are supported effectively by all adults to develop their confidence and self-belief. As a result, pupils try their best and consider that making mistakes helps them get better. One pupil said, 'Learning is fun. If we do something wrong we know that we will do it better the next time because we will know what not to do.' When asked if he was worried about being wrong, he said, 'Making mistakes is all part of improving.'
- You utilise local authority support effectively. For example, the recent governance review that the local authority carried out is helping you to further develop the strategic leadership within the school. You acknowledge that there is still some work to do to ensure that all governors challenge leaders as effectively as the best ones.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- an increasing number of pupils apply their curriculum knowledge more precisely so that they make even quicker progress to attain the national high standard in reading, writing and mathematics
- they act on the advice from the local authority so that all governors are as effective as the best ones with the support and challenge that they give to leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, members of the governing body, including the chair, and also a representative from the local authority. I listened to pupils read and spoke with a few groups of pupils about their school experience. You and I visited all classes and scrutinised pupils' workbooks. In addition, I analysed the school's safeguarding arrangements and records, including the single central record (the school's record of safeguarding recruitment checks on staff). I evaluated the school's documentation in relation to pupils' performance, improvement planning, attendance, governing body meetings and monitoring records. I took account of six responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, five responses to the Ofsted free text service, 15 responses from the pupils to Ofsted's online survey and 14 responses to the staff survey. The school website is compliant with statutory requirements.

The specific areas of focus for the inspection were:

- the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding
- how the quality of teaching and learning is improving across the whole school since the previous inspection
- how leaders are improving the provision for disadvantaged pupils so that they achieve as well as their peers
- what the school is doing to improve pupils' progress in reading
- how successfully staff are using the new assessment processes to ensure that all pupils make good progress, particularly most-able pupils and those who need to catch up.