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Heather Overton
Headteacher
The Gateway Primary Academy
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Dear Mrs Overton

Short inspection of The Gateway Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2017, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in September 2012.

This school continues to be good.

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

You remained as headteacher of the school following its conversion to an academy in February 2014. Since that time, there have been several changes in staff. Despite these changes, you have successfully ensured that the school remains good. You provide strong leadership to the school. You are ably supported by your deputy headteacher and together you make an effective team. You told me about the good work you have done to develop the role of subject leaders. They agree that they have been given the help they need and now play an important role in the school's ongoing improvement. Governors are supportive of your work and also ask the questions necessary to provide appropriate challenge. The capacity for leaders to improve the school still further is clear to see.

All parents I spoke to, as well as those who completed Ofsted's online survey, agreed that their children are happy at school. They said that the school is well led and managed and all would recommend the school to other parents. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their very good attendance. They particularly enjoy the rich, broad range of subjects the school offers. Quite rightly, you make sure that pupils have good opportunities to play sport and to be creative in art and music. Classrooms are attractive places for learning. The bright displays of pupils' work demonstrate your high expectations. Pupils are well behaved. They are kind to each other and play happily with pupils from across the school. Year 6 pupils told me that

the role of a 'play leader' is an important one with specially trained pupils helping to keep the playground a happy and safe place to play. You have created a very welcoming school of which you, parents and pupils are rightly proud.

This inspection did not evaluate the progress the school has made since its last inspection as the areas identified for improvement related to the predecessor school. However, we discussed the impact of your work to improve the teaching of mathematics. You told me about the training that staff had received to understand the new mathematics curriculum and its higher expectations. The impact of this was evidenced in the significantly strong progress Year 6 pupils made in mathematics in 2016. We also discussed pupils' strong progress in reading and the positive impact of the introduction of even more challenging books such as 'Robinson Crusoe'. However, you recognise the need to raise pupils' achievement in writing so that more reach the high standards of which they are capable.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is taken appropriately seriously. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Parents I spoke to, as well as those who completed Ofsted's online survey, agreed that their children are safe in school. They appreciate you and your deputy headteacher being available on the playground every morning to talk to if they have any concerns. Parents also said they could talk to the class teacher if necessary.

The positive relationships between adults and pupils help pupils feel safe. The school's golden rules are used well to remind pupils how to behave and support a strong culture of safety. Pupils told me that bullying is wrong and that the annual anti-bullying week, as well as reminders in assemblies, teach them about the harm that bullying can do. Pupils know how important it is to keep safe while using computers and telephones. The Year 6 'e-safety crew' are pupils who work with others across the school to explain and reinforce different ways to keep safe when using technology. All staff receive appropriate training and weekly staff briefings keep staff up to date.

Inspection findings

- In 2016, too few Year 6 pupils reached the high standard in writing. Progress in writing was much slower than in reading and mathematics. School leaders were disappointed with these results. They recognise the need to make sure that more pupils reach the high standards in writing, in the way they do in reading and mathematics. Staff have worked with other local schools to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments in writing. They have devised a new and exciting curriculum so that pupils are motivated and keen to write. For example, Year 6 pupils enjoy writing about German paratroopers as part of their second world war topic. A focus on improving pupils' vocabulary is proving successful. Pupils' books show that they are encouraged to use an increasingly wide choice of words, so that by Year 6 they are using interesting and varied vocabulary.

- Leaders are aware that although activities motivate pupils to write, some teachers are still developing an understanding of the higher expectations of writing that the new curriculum demands. Teachers do not consistently use the information they have about pupils to make sure that work is matched precisely to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress, rather than rapid progress, in writing. Leaders do not have a strategic overview of how well the most able pupils are achieving across the school. This hinders their ability to evaluate fully the impact of actions they are taking.
- Leaders track the progress of disadvantaged pupils carefully. Pupil premium funding is targeted to provide any additional support needed. This support includes, for example, extra help with reading, opportunity to attend the homework club and adult support in class. The school's own information about how well disadvantaged pupils are doing, as well as work in pupils' books, show that disadvantaged pupils are making increasingly good progress across subjects and year groups. Disadvantaged pupils spoken to during the inspection said they enjoyed learning.
- The 2016 key stage 1 assessments showed that too few middle-attaining pupils exceeded age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there have been changes to staff since last year in Year 1 and Year 2. The school's information, and current pupils' books, show that the progress of middle-attaining pupils is strong and better this year, especially in reading and mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers use assessment information more sharply to plan writing tasks that match pupils' needs
- teachers develop a thorough understanding of the higher expectations of the new writing curriculum
- the achievement of the most able pupils is checked more closely.

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

Joanna Toulson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, your deputy headteacher, subject leaders, representatives of the governing body and the external consultant who has been working with you. I had

a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority. You and I spent most of the morning in classrooms, observing teaching and learning and scrutinising a wide range of pupils' work. I took account of the 42 responses by parents to Ofsted's online survey. I also spoke to several parents at the start of the school day. I talked with pupils during lessons as well as at lunchtime. I looked at a range of documentation, including information about pupils' progress and records relating to safeguarding.