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Mr Shane Owen
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Dear Mr Owen

Short inspection of Rochford Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to the school on 28 February 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 May 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection, despite there being many changes in teaching staff and leadership. When the school became an academy and joined the multi-academy trust in 2014, there was an executive headteacher in situ. You were appointed as head of school in September 2015 and the role of executive headteacher ceased in summer 2016. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2015 and, since 2013, 14 members of teaching staff have left the school for a variety of reasons. You have recently restructured the inclusion team, appointing a pastoral lead to complement your part-time special educational needs coordinator. You also take advantage of the trust's inclusion manager, who works with your school one day a week. In the last year, you have invested in the development of the outdoor areas. This is particularly noticeable in early years where you and your staff have undertaken a project to broaden the opportunities children have to extend their learning outside of the classroom.

The passion with which you and your deputy headteacher lead the school is palpable. You demonstrate high expectations of all your staff and have ensured that teaching is, at the very least, good across the school. Your leadership is clearly welcomed, as seen in the 34 overwhelmingly positive responses to Ofsted's staff survey. One response was 'I am so proud to be a member of Rochford Primary. From the first day I started everybody has been so supportive.' You and your governors invest a considerable amount of time and resources into ensuring that staff are well supported, are regularly offered opportunities to progress in their

careers and develop their expertise. You regularly monitor the quality of teaching and know your staff's strengths and areas of development very well. This ensures that you plan professional development for both the whole staff and individuals. There are several examples where the direct impact of your monitoring and support can be seen on both individual teachers and pupils' progress.

The impact of 'the ethos of constant learning', as one teacher described it, is that teaching is at least good across the school, and in some cases outstanding. Staff have high expectations of both themselves and the pupils in their care. Teachers often take the opportunity to talk to other adults during lessons, modelling how to extend thinking and learning. This not only helps pupils to see the respect that adults have for each other, but also to use similar questions or challenges when talking with their classmates. As a result, the quality of discussion between pupils within lessons is impressive. From the very youngest children learning about money while they were 'shopping', to those who were writing inspiring sentences from a stimulus picture, pupils clearly benefit from the discussions they have with each other. The recent pupil survey that the school conducted noted that pupils particularly value the time they get to talk with their learning partners. This is evident in all classes and greatly influences the energy with which pupils approach their 'fun and exciting' work.

Pupils told me that they really enjoy coming to school; 'It is a happy place' said one pupil. They say that they are challenged in the work they do. It was evident from the learning we saw together during the inspection and from the books we looked at that there is no complacency in teachers' drive to develop pupils' learning. Pupils say that they are supported well in class. They particularly like the school's new marking and feedback policy which we saw in all pupils' books. Pupils take good heed of teachers' comments and the majority respond appropriately. They value the 'green for growth' next step comments they receive. Teachers build in regular opportunities for pupils to check on previous work that needs correction and, what is more, pupils are eager to do so! Several times during the inspection, pupils showed me what they had learned from the helpful comments, and could tell me where they think they have improved. 'I used to get in a muddle with these sorts of problems, but now I work it out quite well,' said one pupil who was working on the best method to use to solve more complex addition calculations. Teaching assistants are used very well to support pupils who may be stuck or at risk of falling behind their classmates. Teaching assistants sensitively probe and question while reminding pupils constantly of what they already know, even if they are struggling. The impact of this approach is that pupils know that they are always going to be helped and guided. The most vulnerable pupils are, therefore, making at least expected progress and many of these pupils' progress is accelerating.

The communal areas around the school are adorned with high-quality displays of pupils' work. You have ensured that pupils can see what all other year groups are learning, by, for example, putting key stage 2 displays in key stage 1 areas and vice versa. The ever-developing curriculum offers pupils many opportunities to take part in really exciting and often adventurous learning. Consequently, pupils' experiences are many and varied. Visitors to the school or visits outside of the school enhance

the curriculum. From going to the Palace Theatre to re-enacting the story of the Trojan Horse in school; from visits by a professional 100 metre hurdler to pupils taking part in activities like driving pedal karts or building bridges at Belchamps; from a visit to the Museum of Childhood, to the visit by Professor Poopenshtinken, who introduced a new maths club. Pupils and parents alike clearly love this aspect of the school, and all of the additional clubs that are offered. One parent said about her daughter, 'She is involved in lots of enrichment activity including choir and gym,' while another commented, 'I am extremely happy that I chose this school.'

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors take safeguarding very seriously. As a result, you have ensured that every member of staff understands their responsibility to keep children safe, and is appropriately trained to do so. Pupils say they feel safe and know who to go to if they have any worries. This is because you and your staff teach pupils how to keep safe both inside and outside of school. They know how to keep themselves safe online and that they should not communicate with anyone that they do not personally know, and you offer parents the opportunity to fully appreciate the possible risks of online communication. All of the relevant checks are made to ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. You and your chair of governors regularly meet to discuss any emerging concerns. Senior leaders are vigilant in recording any incidents and are tenacious in following up actions through the good links you have with external agencies. Attendance of the most vulnerable pupils is improving because you have raised the awareness of the benefits of regular attendance. You accept that this work still has some way to go to ensure that all parents fully appreciate the need for all pupils to attend school regularly and on time. The new 'late on the gate' initiative is proving to be successful and some improvements can already be seen.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry I pursued to ascertain whether the school remains good, related to the progress the school has made since the previous inspection on raising achievement by increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching. Learning seen in all lessons during the inspection was of good quality. Pupils were on task, eager to complete their work and responded well to challenging questions or scenarios that adults posed. The proportion of pupils currently in the school who are making the expected progress and are at age-related expectations is high. This was confirmed by the scrutiny of work that I undertook with senior leaders and by the analysis of the school's own assessment information. In reading, writing and mathematics there are very few pupils who are not progressing well, and, where they are not, these pupils are rapidly identified by teachers and appropriate support is given.
- There is a little inconsistency in a couple of classes in either reading, writing or mathematics, but this is not the norm. Teachers have high expectations, give pupils very clear guidance and feedback, and pupils largely respond appropriately. Pupils say they are given good support. They know their own targets and how to improve their work and readily accept the 'green for growth'

challenge. We saw a few examples of pupils challenging themselves rather than waiting for adults to challenge them. However, this is not yet widespread. Teachers make learning 'fun' and interesting and explore all possible links with the school's themed curriculum. It was a joy to watch 'Mr Twit' appear in one class and to see how the pupils readily questioned him about the poor way that he treats his wife!

- The second line of enquiry related to how well pupils are taught in key stage 2 to ensure that all groups attain well and make the best progress they can. Last year's Year 6 pupils did not achieve as well as they should have. Their academic year was disrupted several times and during that year they had at least five teachers. Although leaders did everything possible to ensure that as many pupils achieved at least the expected attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, some pupils were undoubtedly affected by the lack of stability, particularly in mathematics. The school had also changed its mathematics scheme last year and teachers were not as confident as they needed to be in both using the scheme and accurately assessing pupils. The very able English and maths leaders supported Year 6 in the Spring term and, as a result, the progress that many pupils made increased considerably.
- Predictions for this year's Year 6 look very different and are confirmed by the work seen during inspection. The cohort is on track to achieve above the national average in 2017. This was beautifully demonstrated in at least two lessons. Pupils were writing about using pictures to conjure up images. Such examples as 'Behind the inn, the blasphemous soldier stood cackling' and 'On the top shelves in the pet shop, food bags stand like soldiers,' demonstrate the high-quality writing that pupils compose. As a result of very secure teaching, the proportion of current pupils that are making accelerated progress is increasing, particularly in upper key stage 2. This includes disadvantaged pupils who often make better progress than their classmates.
- How well governors hold leaders to account for the achievement of disadvantaged pupils was also a line of enquiry. Governors are very aware of their responsibility to ensure that all pupils make the best progress they can. They monitor the use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils well, although the school's website evidences only the impact of this funding on pupils at the end of each key stage. It is clear from the school's own assessment information, the book scrutiny that we conducted during the inspection of disadvantaged pupils' work and from the learning we saw, that teachers plan well for all pupils currently in the school. Adult support is given appropriately to pupils who need it, including extending the learning of those more able disadvantaged pupils. There is very little difference between the progress of this group of pupils and their classmates. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 this year who are on track to achieve what is expected of them is high, which is considerably better than in 2016.
- Governors are aware of two year groups where there is a little inconsistency. The governor responsible for reporting on the progress of disadvantaged pupils asks appropriately challenging questions and regularly monitors the provision these pupils receive. The work that the pastoral lead, inclusion manager and you do to quickly spot any underachievement and put in place appropriate support

has undoubtedly made a difference this year. Raising the profile of attendance of this group in particular has already begun to pay dividends.

- The last line of enquiry related to how well leaders know the strengths and areas of development in the school, through rigorous monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment. This is the first academic year that you have been the head of school without an executive headteacher overseeing the school. You have done considerable work with your very able leaders to ensure that the school's self-evaluation is now better informed by rigorous monitoring. As a result, evaluation is accurate and concurs with what was seen during the inspection.
- The school development plan, while very detailed and lengthy, sets clear areas for improvement based on your evaluation. You recognise that sometimes the areas for improvement are not as tightly focused as they could be and that this does not always enable the school to celebrate its many successes. You have already met with your leadership team to discuss how best to refine this document so that it is more easily used by all staff and governors. This only serves to demonstrate how reflective you are of your own practice.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan in line with the school's new mathematics scheme to ensure that all pupils consistently make at least expected progress and an increasing proportion of pupils make more than expected progress in mathematics
- teachers encourage pupils to challenge themselves in their learning and develop two of the school's core values: resilience and determination
- the profile of attendance continues to be raised so that all pupils, including the most vulnerable, attend school regularly and on time.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Brock
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your deputy headteacher to discuss progress since the previous inspection. All three of us undertook observations of learning in all classes, viewed work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons. I held meetings with your inclusion manager, a group of governors including the

chair, the chief executive of the trust and a group of pupils. You, your senior leaders and I, scrutinised pupils' work in their English and mathematics books and looked at the school's own assessment information. I examined a range of sources of information including your self-evaluation, the school's plans for development and records of behaviour. I also scrutinised the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures and records, the checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with children, and information relating to attendance. I took into account the school's own survey of pupils, the 34 staff responses to Ofsted's survey, 48 parent responses and 34 texts from parents.