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Mr Paul Hooper
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hooper

Short inspection of Cooper's Lane Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 February 2017 with Denise James-Mason, Ofsted Inspector, 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 March 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 had an immediate positive impact on the drive for further improvement after your arrival in 2015. You set out clear expectations for enhancing the ambitions of pupils and improving their self-belief in what they can achieve. You are ensuring that leaders and governors have the information and knowledge to tackle any weaknesses in school provision with transparency and honesty. Parents hold school leaders in high regard, with many writing positive comments about your work in Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.

You have realised that middle leaders must take more direct responsibility for routine checks on the quality of teaching. This had been an area for improvement at the last inspection. Your work to develop the skills of middle leaders is ensuring that they hold teachers to account for making good use of information to sustain pupils' progress. Teachers are expected to understand and account for the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged. Your middle leaders conduct regular checks on the progress of these pupils and challenge teachers to amend their plans if there are signs that pupils' learning is stalling. As a result, for example, inspectors found that pupils of all abilities are well supported to make good progress in reading.

Senior leaders have acted effectively to improve the progress of the most able pupils. This was also an area for improvement at the last inspection. As a result, the proportion of the most able pupils working at a high level of attainment by the end of key stage 2 in mathematics was well above the national average in 2016.

Through your school improvement plan, you continue to strive to ensure that additional funding is used well, focusing sharply on developing the skills of disadvantaged pupils to explain their reasoning in their mathematics work.

You have sustained good rates of attendance. However, you acknowledged that some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were not attending as well as others. These pupils are attending more regularly in the current year. The small number of pupils whose attendance remains a concern are being skilfully and relentlessly challenged to come to school more often.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Your records of safeguarding concerns and the checks on the suitability of staff are well organised and meet requirements. You understand the importance of robust safeguarding arrangements during the selection of staff. The files I looked at demonstrate that interview questions related to safeguarding and the notes made by interviewers provide strong challenge to prospective applicants.

Governors ask you questions during their regular review of safeguarding arrangements, which enable you to reflect on and refine your policy and procedures. The training provided for members of staff covers issues relevant to your school. You make sure that teaching staff understand the latest guidance on safeguarding as well as providing time for them to read it. New and more experienced staff understand the process for referring concerns. The cases we discussed as examples demonstrate the effectiveness of your communications with external professionals and parents. This ensures that information is shared clearly and acted on effectively in your work to improve outcomes for pupils whose well-being may be at risk.

Inspection findings

- We decided to focus on the progress of the most able pupils in reading and those whose reading skills are weaker than that typical for their age. The pupils I spoke to had a thorough understanding of what they are working on to improve their reading. The most able readers could tell inspectors why an author had used a particular phrase or word for effect in the books they were reading.
- Younger pupils could describe how they have been taught to use a dictionary and how to choose which dictionary to select. Pupils who began key stage two with weaker phonics skills are catching up well and making good progress. The arrangements for helping pupils with weaker reading skills make a good transition from the early years to Year 1 have been improved. The effective use of funding for disadvantaged pupils has ensured that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 is higher than the national average for other pupils.
- Teachers provide lively, attractive displays of books, and typically choose books which challenge pupils well. This allows the most able pupils to develop more

sophisticated reading tastes. However, some pupils are asked to read books which are not as successfully matched to the advice teachers have given them for extending their reading skills.

- Another line of enquiry was to consider outcomes for the lower-attaining pupils and the most able pupils in mathematics. Rates of progress for lower-attaining pupils in key stage 2 were weaker than for other groups in 2016. A smaller proportion of the most able disadvantaged pupils attained a higher level than was seen for other pupils.
- The leader for mathematics has introduced a new range of materials and guidance, which is ensuring that there is a better coverage of mathematical themes in each year group. Pupils' work shows that current pupils are gaining greater confidence in using and applying their skills. For example, pupils in Year 2 have made rapid progress from telling the time to solving simple problems using clocks.
- Your thorough and regular analysis of assessment information has enabled you to pick up variations in rates of progress of disadvantaged pupils in different classes. You have provided additional support promptly, with a particular focus on developing pupils' reasoning skills. This is ensuring that the most able disadvantaged pupils are making better progress.
- Work in pupils' books shows that teachers expect pupils to use mathematical vocabulary accurately when explaining their reasoning. For example, pupils were challenged to classify two-dimensional shapes by referring to their mathematical properties. However, some pupils continue to struggle to explain how they have worked out an answer or to describe a mathematical pattern. You recognise that teachers must remain focused on helping pupils acquire the vocabulary and confidence to explain their reasoning and apply their skills.
- Lower-attaining pupils benefit from teachers explaining how to use practical apparatus well to support their learning. Pupils with a wide range of abilities are well catered for in the additional provision for deaf pupils. Any additional work provided by support staff is built upon well in regular lessons with their class teacher. As a result, current lower-attaining pupils in the school are making good progress in mathematics.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that teachers:

- continue to place a priority on developing pupils' skills in explaining their reasoning in mathematics, both verbally and in writing
- ensure that the reading books used in lessons and for homework are well matched to help pupils focus on what they need to do to improve their reading skills further.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held discussions with senior and middle leaders about their work. They met with representatives of the governing body and held a telephone discussion with an officer of the local authority. Inspectors visited classes in key stages 1 and 2 with senior leaders. They heard pupils reading, looked at some of their written work and talked with them about their views of the school. Inspectors scrutinised documents related to safeguarding and the school's self-evaluation. Responses to the online Parent View survey were taken into account, including a number of written responses from parents. Outcomes of the electronic pupil and staff survey provided by Ofsted during the inspection were also considered.