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Mrs Ann Read
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Read

Short inspection of Elmwood Junior 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 the school was judged to be good in July 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Together with senior leaders and governors, you have ensured that Elmwood Junior School is a welcoming and happy place. The governing body, pupils, parents and staff are rightly proud of the inclusive nature of the school. One pupil told me, 'I love this school because it makes everyone feel welcome.' Parents praised the school's strong sense of community. They spoke positively about how well their children settled when they joined the school.

Leaders have addressed the issues identified at the last inspection. They have continued to focus on improving learning for all. You have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school as well as of the areas that need further development. You have taken effective steps to share good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. You and your leadership team regularly check on the work of staff and provide effective professional development, including coaching for all.

The previous inspection found that there was more work to do to improve the teaching of mathematics and raise pupils' achievement. Leaders have reviewed and developed the curriculum for mathematics. Pupils now learn multiplication tables by heart and, as a result, they can solve problems quickly. Pupils showed me how to check their work by understanding the relationship between multiplication and division facts. Pupils use mathematical language accurately to discuss and explain the methods they select when solving problems.

Older pupils speak enthusiastically about how they use knowledge acquired in mathematics lessons in other activities, including science and technology. As a result, pupils' achievement and attitudes in mathematics have improved. They enjoy their mathematics lessons.

Leaders have maintained pupils' positive attitudes to reading since the previous inspection. Pupils are confident and avid readers who enjoy taking books home from the school library. Pupils who need additional help receive well-planned support, which boosts their skills and confidence. Additional support, particularly for the least able disadvantaged readers, helps ensure good progress. Pupils who read to me during the inspection used a range of skills, including phonics, to read unfamiliar words.

The school has rightly identified that there is more to be done in order to ensure that pupils' achievement in writing is as strong as it is in reading and mathematics. Leaders have started to ensure that pupils write more often across all subjects. However, there is still more to be done to ensure that standards and expectations in spelling, punctuation and grammar are equally high in all subject areas.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Records are checked and are appropriately monitored by senior leaders, including the chair of the governing body. All staff have received the required training to support their understanding and knowledge of the government's current statutory guidance. Senior leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture. Staff are confident to recognise signs that a pupil might be at risk of harm, including from sexual exploitation, gang-related violence, exposure to drugs and female genital mutilation. Clear procedures are in place and staff know how to report concerns.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They are clear about how to protect themselves when online. Older pupils have an awareness of gangs. A pupil told me, 'Joining a gang is a bad thing because they just pretend they are like your family and care about you, but they don't and they just want you to do bad things for them.' Younger pupils are able to talk about 'stranger danger' and understand that strangers can be friendly in order to gain trust. Pupils show a good awareness of the different forms bullying might take. They know what to do if they experience bullying and all feel confident to report it to a member of staff. Parents are confident that on the few occasions when bullying has happened, senior leaders have dealt with it very swiftly.

Inspection findings

- I began by exploring how effectively leaders have identified and addressed potential barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils, and equally, how leaders use pupil premium funding to support the development of skills, particularly in science and writing. The school's own information and national data showed that there was still work to be done to close gaps between disadvantaged and other pupils, particularly in these areas.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors have a good understanding of the progress that different groups of pupils make within the school, including disadvantaged pupils. They are well informed and monitor the spending of pupil premium funding effectively. Minutes of meetings show that they ask leaders challenging questions about pupils' performance and progress.
- The science leader recognises that some pupils have limited access to outdoor learning and is developing an 'eco-zone garden' to make science more practical. This provides active learning experiences in science for pupils and writing opportunities across the curriculum. Pupils are able to use the skills taught in literacy when writing in other subjects.
- Pupils are developing their scientific skills and knowledge well, including the skills of enquiry, investigation and recording. The 'learning walls' in classrooms consolidate pupils' learning in science effectively.
- Strong links have been made between science, mathematics and technology and, as a result, disadvantaged pupils see the relevance of science in their lives and the wider world of work. Several pupils stated that they would like careers in engineering and the sciences when they leave school.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported in class. This is particularly true for the most- and least able disadvantaged pupils, who make strong progress in reading and mathematics.
- I investigated what the school has done since the last inspection to improve challenge in mathematics to ensure good progress and how sustainable recent improvements are.
- Senior and middle leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment regularly. They ensure that good teaching practice is shared by enabling teachers to observe each other.
- Teachers have received regular professional development to teach the new mathematics curriculum. As a result, they are more confident and proficient at teaching mathematical skills and providing opportunities for pupils to solve problems and develop reasoning skills.
- Progress in mathematics is strong across the school. Good subject leadership has ensured an improved curriculum and a clear strategy to ensure that pupils develop their basic skills. Teachers receive the support and guidance needed to deliver interesting, relevant lessons that pupils enjoy. Pupils told me that they liked mathematics when it was hard.

- The most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils have opportunities to deepen their understanding and master challenging new concepts through completing demanding tasks.
- Robust monitoring and feedback ensure that improvements are sustainable.
- I questioned what leaders are doing to improve outcomes for pupils with middle prior ability, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This was because the 2016 key stage 2 data for the school indicates that the most- and least able pupils made more progress than middle-ability pupils, particularly in writing.
- Classrooms provide a calm working atmosphere, resulting in pupils in all year groups focusing and concentrating on their learning. As a result of opportunities to reflect on their own learning pupils were able to speak confidently about their learning and their progress.
- Reading is promoted well throughout the school. Pupils who read to me spoke with interest and knowledge about their books. Pupils read with fluency, accuracy and expression and can answer questions about the text, make predictions and express opinions clearly.
- The mathematics curriculum puts emphasis on developing pupils' ability to discuss mathematical thinking and reasoning.
- Pupils with prior low or high attainment, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds have made good progress in reading and mathematics. This is as a result of high expectations and work set at an appropriately challenging level. A range of effective support ensure gaps in knowledge are quickly addressed so pupils progress to the next stage of learning.
- The writing curriculum has been developed to engage pupils and focus on the skills of spelling, punctuation, handwriting and grammar. As a result, the quality of writing seen in literacy books was of a good standard for the majority of pupils. However, this good standard is not transferred across all subjects because teachers do not insist that pupils continue to write, spell and punctuate to the same high standard in all subjects.
- Finally, I considered how effective leader's actions are to improve attendance for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly those with education, health and care plans.
- Although attendance is above average, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is higher than the national average for some groups of pupils. Leaders put effective strategies in place to improve attendance, including rewards and incentives. Improvements in attendance, no matter how small, are recognised and rewarded. As a result, pupils are well motivated to attend school every day. The school has some pupils with complex medical issues. Where absence cannot be avoided, strategies are in place to minimise the impact of lost learning time. The school tries to maintain regular contact with parents and works with external agencies to ensure good attendance for all.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they are as ambitious for pupils with prior middle ability, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, as they are for those with prior high and low starting points
- expectations for writing across the curriculum are consistently high in all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

Lou Anderson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

A range of activities to explore these areas during the inspection were carried out:

- the headteacher and I jointly observed learning and scrutinised pupils' work across the school
- during visits to lessons, I talked to pupils about their learning and listened to them read
- I talked to pupils in all year groups, in classes and less formally in the playground and lunch hall about their experiences of school and discussed their awareness of how to keep themselves safe
- I held meetings with you and leaders at all levels, including the chair of the governing body
- very few parents responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I met with several parents in the playground and took emails and free-text correspondence into account
- I analysed staff responses to Ofsted's questionnaire
- I scrutinised documentation including: the school's self-evaluation; the school development plan; documentation relating to safeguarding procedures; information relating to pupils' progress; information relating to behaviour and attendance; and minutes of governing body meetings.