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Mrs Helen Daniels
Headteacher
Cookham Rise Primary School
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Dear Mrs Daniels

Short inspection of Cookham Rise Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 April 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 January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

You and your team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Staff share your nurturing ethos and work hard to ensure that pupils leave Cookham Rise with high academic outcomes alongside the confidence and self-esteem to succeed. Parents overwhelmingly agree, one commenting that the school provides 'a welcoming, warm environment for children to shine in'. Another wrote that, 'Cookham Rise hits the mark.'

You have maintained the strengths of the school identified in the previous inspection report and addressed the recommendations for improvement successfully. In particular, you have provided opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills through producing longer pieces of writing in all subject areas. Teachers provide appropriate challenge for the most able pupils to achieve their best, although you are, rightly, continuing to promote high aspiration and challenge for all.

You and your team have successfully developed a creative and engaging curriculum. Pupils told me that they enjoyed the trips and special events such as the 'visitor from Ancient Greece' who taught them all about democracy. Parents also commented on the way that staff match activities to the interests of the pupils. For example, one parent said that 'the school identifies and encourages a child's individual talents'. Many parents also said that they appreciate the frequent communication, including the weekly class letters. Parents also value the

opportunities to work in partnership with the school to support pupils' learning. One parent commented that, 'Their open-door policy to raise any issues is second to none.'

Pupils are confident and self-assured. They enjoy school and told me that it is good because of the 'fun learning' and nice teachers. They were keen to show me their work and proud to explain their progress, especially when they were able to show how they had successfully applied their learning to solve problems in mathematics. They work well in groups, showing respect for others' ideas. I observed Year 4 pupils thoughtfully discussing which words and phrases most accurately described the atmosphere of the new den that had mysteriously appeared in their playground. Pupils' behaviour outside of lessons is also good and I observed them playing well together, across year groups. They enjoy the responsibilities they are given, for example, creating rotas for different play equipment, and told me that it 'makes it fair for everyone'.

You have a good knowledge of the school and have set clear priorities for development based on close analysis. You have worked effectively with other schools and made good use of specialist support, including that from the local authority. This has helped you to refine and improve processes, for example, your approach to teaching writing. You have worked closely with your local authority adviser to review your use of the pupil premium funding, and carefully track the provision for disadvantaged pupils on an individual basis. However, you are now working to improve your evaluation of the effectiveness of each strategy so that you can adapt your plans more swiftly, when required.

The governing body is equally determined to provide the best for your pupils. Governors work hard to develop their knowledge and skills and make good use of external training. For example, they attended training to help them understand how school assessment information is measured nationally. They are aware that this development needs to be continued to ensure that they are able to more effectively hold school leaders to account and ensure that statutory requirements, such as those regarding the school website, are met.

Safeguarding is effective.

School leaders and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, and records are detailed and of a high quality. Leaders make sure that, when recruiting staff, all appropriate checks are completed. Staff are well trained and display a secure understanding of safeguarding processes and their importance. They know what to look for and how to take action if they are concerned. You and your deputy designated safeguarding lead work effectively with external agencies to support pupils and their families when needed.

Pupils say that school is a safe place and everyone is friendly. They say that there is hardly any bullying or 'mean behaviour', but if there is then they will say, 'Please stop that, I don't like it,' and walk away. Pupils told me that this phrase works most of the time because they have all been taught to use it. However, they also told me

that if it does not work they will tell an adult who will sort out any issues quickly and effectively. The vast majority of parents also have this view.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, I considered how effectively leaders are improving pupils' progress in writing. This is a school improvement priority and leaders have made effective use of high-quality external support for teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers make good use of opportunities for writing across the curriculum. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that most are working at age-related expectations and that the actions taken by leaders and teachers are effective. Pupils like the focus on grammatical accuracy and I observed a group of Year 5 pupils thoughtfully exploring how modal verbs indicated different degrees of possibility in their writing.
- Leaders and teachers have carefully designed a creative curriculum to engage pupils and prepare them for their next steps. I found that it furthers pupils' learning and development effectively. Parents and pupils like the wide-ranging links in the projects. For example, the story of Pandora's Box in the Ancient Greeks project is linked to a design and technology challenge to design, make and evaluate a box, using net design in computing. Year 4 pupils enjoyed making a computer animation of Archimedes to illustrate displacement theory. Pupils also enjoy studying the biology of plants and then picking the resulting strawberries. Pupils make jam from the strawberries and then use this at the afternoon tea they plan and provide for the local community centre. These activities successfully enable pupils to make links with their learning. They also effectively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- I examined how leaders ensure that, throughout the school, pupils reach higher levels of attainment. Leaders and teachers have developed a system of different tasks in lessons where pupils are encouraged to move on to more challenging work when they are able. I found that this is effective for many pupils and helps them to make rapid progress. Tasks are often exciting and pupils like applying their knowledge to tricky problems. However, teachers are aware of the need to more closely direct some pupils so that they work at the appropriate level and do not pick an option that is too easy for them. Leaders are also working to raise aspirations for all, so that pupils do not want to pick an easy option but, rather, that they aim to achieve as highly as possible.
- I also considered how effectively governors are holding school leaders to account. The governing body is committed to developing its knowledge and has recently undergone a reorganisation in order to ensure that all governors have full knowledge and understanding of the school and its processes. Many governors have also engaged in training with external specialists. For example, the chair of governors attends the meetings with the local authority adviser regarding the progress of the disadvantaged pupils. However, governors are aware that their knowledge is not always up to date and that they need to fully understand current statutory requirements. They also need to set clear success criteria for school initiatives against which progress may be sharply evaluated, for

example, the use of the pupil premium funding, so that they are fully able to hold school leaders to account.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors further develop their knowledge in order to more closely hold school leaders to account
- leaders sharpen their evaluation of the impact of the pupil premium so that the effectiveness of interventions can be addressed in a timely and effective manner
- teachers continue to challenge pupils to exceed age-related expectations.

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

Yours sincerely

Lucy English
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, other members of school staff and members of the governing body. I also met with your education improvement adviser from the local authority. Together, you and I planned the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. We jointly visited all the classes in the school to observe pupils' learning, speak with pupils and look at their books. We also met with a group of teachers to scrutinise a sample of pupils' books. I spoke with pupils at morning break. I spoke with parents at the start of the school day and considered 48 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 30 written contributions by parents. I spoke with staff and took account of 24 responses to the online staff questionnaire. I looked at a range of documentation including information about safeguarding and the work of governors. I also scrutinised and discussed the school's tracking of pupils' progress and attainment, and the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement.