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Philip Kyriacou
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Dear Mr Kyriacou

Short inspection of Tudor Court Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 20 April 2017 with Michael Jude, 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 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.

Tudor Court Primary School is a welcoming and warm environment, where the corridors are awash with celebrations of pupils' work and achievements. Pupils show their work proudly to visitors and speak effusively about their lessons. Most parents and staff have highly positive views about the school, especially about the improvements since your arrival in September 2015.

The school converted to an academy in July 2014. Since your appointment in September 2015, you have reinvigorated and improved the quality of education that the school provides. This has been very important as the number of pupils the school serves has grown considerably. You have secured high-quality leadership to ensure that improvement priorities are achieved. In developing a new generation of leaders, you have established stronger links with other primary schools so that leaders can measure their effectiveness more robustly against other successful schools.

You have been unequivocal in your stance about the importance of effective teaching. You have continued to develop strong working relationships with local teacher training providers, so that you can train more teachers and leaders 'in-

house'. You have not shied away from difficult conversations with staff where their performance has not been good enough. You have ensured that regular pupils' progress meetings hold staff to account for pupils' achievement. Staff have risen admirably to the many challenges that you have set them. Consequently, teaching, learning and assessment are securely effective across the school, with many examples of very high-quality practice.

You, your leaders and other staff have worked diligently to develop an engaging curriculum that allows pupils to thrive. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were incredibly enthusiastic about their learning and the activities that teachers provide for them. Pupils say that learning is made fun by their teachers. While the curriculum is varied and engaging, your curriculum leaders have identified that there is still more work to do to improve the accuracy and recording of assessment in the foundation subjects. Equally, staff confidence in some subjects could be further enhanced, most notably in science.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, as the designated safeguarding leader, alongside your deputies, ensure that staff record all incidents or concerns, no matter how seemingly trivial. This allows you to remain vigilant about pupils' safety and well-being. You use the information that you have to make appropriate referrals to external agencies, and work effectively with these groups, to secure better care for pupils where necessary.

You ensure that attendance and safeguarding go hand in hand in your work. Your family welfare officer is making a real difference in supporting parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly. For example, despite the overall attendance of disadvantaged pupils being below the national average, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved year-on-year since the academy opened. You also keep a watchful eye on the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In doing so, you work closely to support families, on an individual basis, to provide stability in their children's education, even when they face some considerable challenges.

Pupils feel safe and are taught how to stay safe, online and in the wider community, through a variety of lessons, assemblies and visiting speakers. Pupils say that behaviour is good, and that it is everyone's responsibility to model good behaviour to one another. Equally, pupils are taught to respect each other's differences as something to be valued. As one pupil said, 'Everyone accepts everyone for who they are.'

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry was to review how leaders are securing improvements for pupils in key stage 1. Although pupils achieved broadly in line with national averages overall in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016, some groups of pupils did not achieve as well as they could have done. This includes the least able pupils and disadvantaged pupils.

- You acknowledge that the school had focused previously too much on attainment, rather than the progress that pupils make between the early years and key stage 1. Your leaders in English and mathematics, alongside your newly appointed leader for key stage 1, are now focusing more sharply on how pupils in key stage 1 are performing in relation to their various starting points. This focus includes consideration of how well teachers use the information available to them when pupils make the transition from the early years into Year 1.
- Consequently, in-year assessment information and inspection evidence suggests that Year 2 pupils are making better progress, while Year 1 pupils, who have benefited from more effective transition from the early years, are making accelerated progress from their various starting points. However, you acknowledge that there is further work required to embed this fully.
- As part of the inspection, we also looked at disadvantaged pupils' outcomes, in particular in key stage 1. Your leaders and governors understand the significance of establishing greater consistency so that disadvantaged pupils can make accelerated progress and attain in line with their non-disadvantaged peers nationally. This is not only a school development plan target, but also an appraisal target for teachers.
- Continuing this line of enquiry, we looked at the phonics provision within the school. You have reorganised phonics arrangements, including the training of staff and how you track pupils' progress. You have used your assessments to identify the needs of pupils more specifically, and have created intervention groups to support this. Current assessment information, and inspection evidence, suggests that pupils' progress in phonics continues to improve, with a rapid improvement in disadvantaged pupils' progress.
- We also looked at the work of pupils in Year 3 who did not achieve the expected standards last year in Year 2. The school's current assessment information, and inspection evidence, shows that these pupils are being helped securely to catch up. They are now working more closely in line with the typical expectations of pupils of their age, in particular disadvantaged pupils.
- Another line of enquiry was to review how effectively leaders were securing accurate identification of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Your appointment of a new leader this year has helped to bring improvement and stability to the provision. She has used her thorough understanding of the most recent guidance to review the use of funding. She has also secured more precise identification of the specific support needed for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, using a broad range of internal and external specialist resources and personnel.
- Your special educational needs leader has worked very closely with the early years leader. Specialist language support and outdoor learning opportunities have been specifically developed for identified pupils. This is because these are the main barriers facing a core number of pupils. Training for teaching assistants is improving their understanding of the children that they are working with and how to help them to develop key skills.
- We identified that some support, more generally, in the school could be sharper, both in how you use your administrative systems to record pupils' needs precisely

and in the support provided by teachers and other adults.

- Following the outcomes in 2016 in key stage 2, you identified that writing, especially for the most able, should be an improvement focus. As part of this focus, you have concentrated on ensuring that pupils are given lots of engaging topics to practise their writing skills, such as women's suffrage, First World War poetry, and fictional texts such as 'An Inspector Calls'. Consequently, pupils not only create high-quality written pieces in a variety of different styles but also enjoy their work and are determined to achieve their very best. As a result, current pupils are making good progress.
- You have been determined that, while you wish to improve the outcomes in writing, you will not reduce your expectations about what pupils need to do to achieve the expected standards. With this in mind, you have continued to ensure that the curriculum provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes, and that handwriting remains a central focus in your evaluation. This is ensuring that pupils are making good progress in writing, especially in key stage 2.
- Governors acknowledge that, prior to your arrival, there had been some complacency about the quality of the school's provision, as governors relied specifically on the strength of pupils' outcomes in 2014 and 2015. Leaders and governors know that not enough emphasis was given to preparing staff for the new national curriculum and the higher expectations of the new government accountability measures.
- Consequently, there has been a meaningful reorganisation of governance, including a change to the chair of governors. Additional governors have been recruited with much-needed skill sets in special educational needs, pupil premium and finance. These governors are using their expertise well to hold school leaders to account. Governors also undertake focused school visits, in particular, to address the small minority of parental concerns on issues such as the quality of communication between the school and home.

Next steps for the school

Leaders, and those responsible for governance, should ensure that:

- they continue to raise standards for disadvantaged pupils, most notably in key stage 1, so that the achievement and attendance of these pupils are more in line with those of other pupils nationally
- they continue to review and sharpen the provision and support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, especially ensuring that administrative systems record this provision more precisely
- they develop curriculum leaders' and teachers' confidence with assessment in the wider curriculum, particularly in science.

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

Yours sincerely

Kim Pigram
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we spoke with you and other senior leaders, including those responsible for leading the provision for disadvantaged pupils, English, mathematics, and special educational needs. We also met with the early years leader, as well as subject and year leaders. We met with four members of the governing body, including the chair. We visited classrooms, looked at teachers' assessment information, and undertook a scrutiny of pupils' work. Some of the visits to classrooms were conducted alongside you and your senior team.

We took account of Ofsted's online questionnaire from 153 parents, as well as 49 staff responses. The Parent View free text did not work during the inspection. Therefore, we sought the views of parents on the morning of the inspection when they brought their children to the school. We also looked at the school's own surveys of parents and carers. We reviewed a range of school documentation, including information related to safeguarding and pupils' progress.