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Mrs Anne Wilson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Wilson

Short inspection of Fircroft Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 February 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 and your leadership team have developed a very inclusive school, where pupils of all backgrounds know that they can thrive, develop into confident young people and achieve academic success. You have a strong sense of moral purpose and your leadership style makes it clear that all adults and pupils have a part to play in the continuing development of the school. You nurture new leadership effectively and staff at all levels in the school organisation feel valued and supported. Pupils, staff and parents recognise the quality of education your school provides and were hugely complimentary about the school through the inspection questionnaires.

The school has continued to make progress since the last inspection and the impact of teaching on pupils' learning is consistently strong across the school. Teachers plan a range of different activities that meet the needs of pupils from their different starting points. As a result, pupils enjoy learning, make progress and are proud of their work. Children's learning and progress in early years are a particular highlight. As a result of strong leadership, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development in early years is well above the national average. Inspiring and imaginative settings are created, such as the visit of the alien spaceship, for pupils to develop a range of vocabulary and new knowledge and skills. Pupils develop a love of learning and experience high expectations. This provides a strong platform for their future development in school.

You and your team accurately evaluate the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making. You have identified pupils' progress in reading and improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils as aspects that require further work.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. The single central record of staff employment checks is well kept and checked regularly by the headteacher and governors with responsibility for safeguarding. The impact of safer recruitment training is clear to see in the quality of information and scrupulously organised staff files. Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Training has had a positive impact on staff practice. As a result, all adults in the school are confident in their understanding of potential risks to pupils and what to do about it.

Pupils are confident that they are safe and this is supported by the views of staff and almost all parents. Pupils are taught how to manage risk for themselves and have participated in workshops and events to learn how to stay safe on the internet, when using mobile phones, and on the roads. School leaders work effectively with other organisations to provide high-quality learning experiences for pupils on how to stay safe. The school supports pupils in all year groups to play together. Some older pupils are trained as play leaders and lead activities at break- and lunchtime. Friendships between pupils are strong. Pupils say that bullying is rare and they are confident that adults will always deal with it.

Inspection findings

- School leaders have made the development of pupils' reading a high priority. Children get off to a strong start in early years. Their phonics knowledge is well developed and they apply their knowledge and skills successfully in reading and writing activities.
- In 2016, 87% of pupils met the expected standard in phonics in Year 1, which is above the national figure. However, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard fell below the national figure. In the current Year 1, the picture has improved for this group of pupils.
- Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 choose their own books and show a resilience and determination to read when faced with a difficult text. They apply their comprehension skills in mathematics successfully. This enables them to tackle complex word problems. Pupils take pride in reading their own writing and complete their reading logs diligently. Parents also contribute to these.
- School leaders' focus on the progress and attainment of middle-ability disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 is having a positive impact. Work in pupils' books in English, mathematics and science and visits to classes show that pupils across the ability range are making progress relative to their starting points. This is because of a high level of consistency in the quality of teaching in respect of pupils' learning, consistent expectations and activities that meet their needs.

- In key stage 1, middle-ability boys' work indicates that a proportion are on track to attain at greater depth in reading. This represents an improvement on 2016. Boys of all abilities enjoy reading.
- In 2016, pupils' overall attendance was in line with the national average. However, the absence of disadvantaged pupils was in the highest 10% of schools nationally. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and an education, health and care (EHC) plan also had high levels of absence and persistent absence.
- In the current academic year, overall pupils' attendance is on track to meet this school's 96% target again. This is as a result of continuing effective work on attendance. Senior leaders ensure that the importance of attending school has a high profile and they are determined to improve it further.
- The attendance of pupils with an EHC plan has improved. The school sets an expectation for these pupils, that they attend in line with other pupils. The school is providing effective support to ensure that this target is met. School attendance panels, where parents meet regularly with the school's educational welfare officer, are having a positive impact on this group of pupils. The persistent absence of this group of pupils has also improved since last year and persistent absence, although still too high, is showing some marked improvement.
- Despite the range of actions that school leaders have put in place, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is stubbornly resistant to improvement. Leaders are continuing to explore ways of working with parents to improve the attendance of this group and have deployed a learning mentor to focus on this priority.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- disadvantaged pupils attend school regularly so that they are able to make better progress
- school leaders continue to work to develop pupils' reading skills and love of reading so that they make better progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Hallett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspector met with the headteacher and the senior leadership team at the start of the school day to review the school's self-evaluation and to plan inspection activities. The inspector visited classes in English and mathematics, in almost all year groups, to observe pupils' learning and to look at their books. The inspector met representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. A telephone conversation was held with the school's improvement partner from Wandsworth local authority. The inspector spoke with pupils in classes and around the school and met with a group of pupils to discuss their views of the school. The inspector listened to pupils read. The inspector evaluated a range of documentation, including safeguarding records. Inspectors considered the 128 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and an email from a parent, and the 24 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the 26 responses to the staff questionnaire.