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Mr Philip Boulton
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Dear Mr Philip Boulton

Short inspection of The Ridge Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 25 May 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 April 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You are driven and determined to ensure that your vision of, 'a school family, engaged, aspiring and learning together' fully describes the school – and it does.

You know the school very well, providing an honest evaluation of the strengths and areas to improve. Using this information, you have ensured that staff receive quality professional development. You have skilfully woven professional development into the development of the whole school, so that staff learn together.

You distribute the responsibility for improving the school effectively. Subject leaders are empowered to move their subjects forward. There has been an emphasis on improving the teaching of mathematics and reading. Subject leaders have driven these improvements. Teachers talk with excitement and enthusiasm about strategies that improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. A typical comment from subject leaders was, 'since we have introduced this, pupils are soaring'. You agree that subject leaders could have more opportunities to visit lessons and look at books in order to gain a full picture of the impact of their actions to improve their subject areas.

A recommendation from the previous inspection was to ensure that assessment information is used well so that any differences in progress for any groups of pupils

are noticed and quickly acted on in order to reduce these differences. You have been resolute in ensuring that staff understand, and use, the new but fully embedded assessment system. You have ensured that assessment is at the heart of how teachers plan work so that pupils' needs are met effectively.

Teachers use the clearly presented information about pupils' progress to adjust the activities they plan on a daily basis. Leaders are well rehearsed at using whole-school pupil progress information to challenge colleagues further about the progress that different groups are making. There is a clear determination to ensure that pupils achieve well, no matter what challenges they may face.

Your focus has not just been on the basics of mathematics and English; you also believe in developing a wide range of skills for each pupil. You are committed to using every moment in the day for learning, and this includes breaktimes. Pupils really enjoy their learning outside and staff appreciate the heavy investment that you and the governors have made in this. Pupils learn to work together in teams as they play with the wide-ranging resources. Pupils share and cooperate with one another well. Thanks to the professional development they have received, your skilled, experienced lunchtime staff team oversee this with confidence.

Learning outside is also a feature of how the curriculum is delivered. You have ensured that there is an interesting, broad curriculum, which inspires and motivates pupils to want to learn and includes an emphasis on the arts. This is a caring, nurturing school where pupils are well mannered, polite and friendly. Everyone has a chance to shine and do well. Pupils enjoy learning alongside each other. Special themed weeks, such as arts week, enable pupils to learn with pupils from other year groups and they do this with confidence and growing maturity.

Books are presented well and show the pride that pupils have for their work. Pupils display very good attitudes during lessons, listening attentively to their teachers' explanations and getting down to their work quickly. There is a harmonious, productive atmosphere around the school.

Most parents are very happy with the school and agree that the school provides well for their children. A few feel that their concerns could be listened to more effectively. You agree that more could be done to understand parents' views.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Governors are involved in checking procedures and look for ways to learn from the best practice in other schools in order to continue to improve safeguarding procedures even further.

Staff ensure that school is a safe environment in which to learn and pupils are resolute that they feel safe and secure. Pupils are encouraged to learn about how to take risks through their creative play opportunities outside. This contributes to the 'learning together' ethos.

Pupils say that bullying rarely happens in school and if it does, it is quickly resolved through actions from staff. Some parents expressed less positive views about how any concerns are managed. Leaders, including governors, know that there is more to be done to ensure that parents are well informed about the actions the school takes when managing issues.

Staff receive a range of appropriate training about safeguarding issues and each staff meeting includes discussions about pupils who may be at risk of harm. This helps to keep safeguarding as a high priority. Staff are clear about how to spot and report any signs of concern. The designated lead for safeguarding ensures that these concerns are followed up, seeking advice from a range of agencies as required, so that pupils receive the help they need.

Inspection findings

- During the inspection, we agreed to look more deeply at certain specific areas. Our first key line of enquiry was to see how effectively teachers adapt their teaching so that pupils who have special needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged make good progress.
- The school is highly inclusive and pupils enjoy learning alongside each other, showing a caring, supportive attitude as they do so. Teachers adapt learning effectively. They use precise information from their assessments to plan carefully in order to meet differing needs.
- Teachers use a flexible approach to organising learning so that pupils' needs are met. For example, you introduced weekly pupil conferencing for particular pupils who may need some additional individual teaching time. This has been highly effective in boosting pupils' confidence and in ensuring that their learning activities precisely match what they need. Teachers can talk in detail about individual needs of pupils. Pupils really appreciate this extra guidance. Evidence that this strategy is helping pupils can be seen in pupils' books and in the rates of progress they are now making.
- The special educational needs coordinator is ambitious for pupils and ensures that the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is carefully assessed, with adaptations to learning made as needed. Progress for these pupils continues to improve so that for many, progress is good. As with other leaders there is, however, a drive to improve further. The special educational needs coordinator plans to introduce an even sharper approach to individual improvement plans to recognise their precise achievements.
- Our second line of enquiry was to look at how leaders have secured such strong progress in mathematics by the end of Year 6, and whether this is consistent across the school. You have ensured that subject leaders receive good professional development, and because of this investment leaders are well equipped to lead the improvements to the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- Every aspect of the teaching of mathematics has been reviewed. Teachers have

had clear guidance on the strategies to use in order to ensure that pupils not only know the basic facts that they need to answer number problems, but that they can also use these number facts to solve more challenging and complex real-life questions. Progress across the school in mathematics is strong. However, as with other leaders across the school, there is no complacency here. The subject leader is crystal clear about any groups of pupils who are achieving less well and knows what needs to be done to help these pupils to make the faster progress they could.

- Subject leaders are aware that more time spent in classrooms looking at the impact of improvements and the quality of learning in pupils' work would give an even fuller assessment picture and sharpen their advice to their colleagues even more.
- Finally, we agreed to look closely at how effective leaders are in tackling the low attendance for some pupils. You, with the support of governors, have secured additional support from an educational welfare officer who works closely with families who need extra advice and support to improve attendance. This is having a marked impact on improving attendance rates for the small number of pupils for whom this is an issue.
- You have also increased the general expectation across the school for good attendance. Pupils understand the importance of coming to school every day and enjoy the additional awards and rewards for good attendance that are celebrated frequently.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- subject leaders frequently check the impact of their actions on the quality of teaching and learning in order to ensure that these actions are making a difference to the progress pupils make
- pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have precise improvement plans that help them to recognise their successes and make good progress
- parents are confident to raise any concerns they may have with leaders and are also confident that their concerns are responded to effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Tonwen Empson
Her Majesty's Inspector
Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders. Together, we visited all classes. I met with subject leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator. I also met with a group of governors.

We looked at a range of school documents including your evaluation of the schools' performance, the development plan, information about the progress of pupils and a variety of documents related to safeguarding and attendance. I listened to the views of parents at the start of the day. Emails and letters from parents were also taken into account, along with the 64 responses to the online survey, Parent View. The 19 responses to the staff survey were also taken into consideration. I talked to pupils throughout the day and looked at pupils' books. I also observed breaktimes.