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Miss Melanie Neale
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Dear Miss Neale

Short inspection of Gravel Hill Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 June 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 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. In response to the previous inspection report, you made changes to classroom practice. You have identified and tackled weaker teaching and raised expectations about what constitutes effective teaching. A programme of high-quality professional development for all staff, especially for those who are new to teaching, has ensured consistency in the quality of teaching. The provision in the early years has improved. Leaders have ensured that staff have the right skills to promote successfully children's interests. They also provide appropriate challenge to children. As a result, the proportion of children meeting the expected standards was above national averages in 2016. Staff morale is high and there is an air of enthusiasm and energy among the leaders, teachers and support staff.

You have shown a determination to ensure that last year's disappointing results would not be repeated. Senior leaders quickly analysed the reasons for the dip in results. You identified that particular groups of pupils had underperformed and therefore put in a more effective system to track progress for the different groups of pupils. The subsequent action plan ensures that teachers effectively build on prior learning and provide more opportunities to challenge pupils of all abilities. Effectively deployed additional adults deliver sharp and focused support for pupils. This has resulted in pupils developing stamina and resilience when they are challenged in their learning.

Work in books shows that pupils are making strong progress across the school, particularly in reading and mathematics.

Your outward-looking approach has meant you have made a successful link with a local school. You have ensured that this has developed teachers' accuracy in assessing their pupils' progress. Joint teacher moderation exercises have raised expectations further and increased teachers' confidence in providing more challenge, particularly in mathematics. This, alongside the school's revised mathematics curriculum, is having a positive effect on the rates of pupils' progress. Current school information indicates an improvement in the proportion of pupils on track to meet and exceed the national standards.

Middle leaders are clear about the part they play in developing teachers' practice and supporting improvement. They have contributed to raising standards by developing the mathematics curriculum. This has been successful in developing teacher confidence and improving pupils' progress. Leaders revised how the school teaches reading. This has resulted in an improvement in the rate of pupils' progress across the school. Pupils tackle challenging texts successfully. They are developing a love of reading for pleasure and talk confidently about their favourite authors. Leaders are currently reviewing the school's English writing curriculum to ensure that more pupils meet and exceed the expected national standards.

Governors know the school well and have a good understanding of the school's performance. They have a good grasp of expected rates of pupil progress because they effectively use comparisons of the achievement of pupils at Gravel Hill with other pupils nationally. They have supported leaders' quick response to ensuring that the proportion of pupils meeting or exceeding national standards increases this year.

Parents are supportive of the school and are confident that their children are happy, enjoy their learning and make progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that all the necessary safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that safeguarding records are detailed and of a high quality. Together with the school's secretary and safeguarding governor, you ensure that all the necessary checks are made on the suitability of members of staff to work with children.

Training is thorough so that staff and governors understand the current guidance. Staff have a clear understanding of the different types of abuse and the signs to look out for in pupils' behaviour, should there be a concern. They know how to refer their concerns and how to deal with any issues that arise. Referrals to the local authority are made promptly and followed up rigorously to make sure that pupils are kept safe from any potential dangers. You work closely with external agencies to ensure that families are well supported.

Pupils know that staff quickly resolve any disputes. They have been taught about personal safety when using online technology. Topics in assemblies build upon lessons to help pupils understand how to manage risk and help keep themselves safe. This work has developed pupils' knowledge and understanding of e-safety. Parents, staff and pupils agree that the school is a safe community.

Inspection findings

- I looked at the school's procedures to see how governors ensure that they fulfil their statutory responsibilities to help keep pupils safe. You and the leadership, including governors, have created a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. You ensure that rigorous record-keeping ensures that concerns are followed up swiftly with outside agencies so that pupils get effective support. This helps to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Governors have a secure overview of their responsibilities. Their regular visits ensure that school procedures are being followed effectively.
- I also looked at how leaders have spent the pupil premium funding to ensure that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are achieving similar results to other pupils nationally, which was not the case in 2016 at the end of key stage 2.
- School records show the funding is being used effectively by leaders to support the majority of disadvantaged pupils across the school, for example through daily small-group or individual reading sessions. This is having a positive impact on accelerating progress.
- Teachers have a secure knowledge of the disadvantaged pupils in their classes. Performance management targets for teachers include improving progress for these pupils. This means leaders effectively hold teachers to account for increasing the rate of disadvantaged pupils' progress.
- You recognise that ensuring pupils' regular attendance is a crucial part of helping pupils succeed. I checked the school's attendance information. This is because the number of pupils eligible for free school meals who were persistently absent last year was high. You have worked hard with families on this. The school's system of support has ensured that attendance of these pupils has improved. Currently, overall attendance is above the national average.
- I explored what leaders are doing to improve outcomes for the most able pupils, to ensure that a higher proportion achieve greater depth in reading, writing and maths. In 2016, too few pupils, particularly the most able pupils, reached the higher standards. You acted quickly to find out the reasons for the decline. Consequently, teachers have improved the level of challenge for all pupils, especially the most able. Work in pupils' books shows that standards are now higher.
- The most able pupils receive work that is well matched to their abilities. The school's own assessment information shows that a higher number of pupils are now on track to reach above age-related expectations in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Leaders recognise that even more pupils need to make progress to achieve the greater depth standards in writing.

- Finally, I looked at how leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching is securing an improvement in pupils' progress. This is because the results in 2016 were below floor standards. You and the senior leaders quickly reviewed the teaching and set out a system that set high expectations for raising pupil standards.
- Effective teacher training has resulted in teaching being consistently strong and reflects the leaders' ambition for ensuring that pupils achieve as well as they can. Evidence from pupils' books and observations of learning clearly indicate that pupils are improving their knowledge and skills.
- High-quality questioning from staff effectively develops pupils' vocabulary when responding to challenge in lessons and in their books. Pupils tackle their tasks with enthusiasm and show they can persevere even when the work is difficult.
- Assessment information is both reliable and accurate. This was evident in pupils' work alongside the school's information on pupils' progress. Assessment is used effectively to plan learning. Pupils are set work that is matched to their needs and starting points. As a result, pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are making better progress with their learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils have more opportunities to develop their writing skills in order to increase the proportion of pupils exceeding the national standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Sara Morgan

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I carried out the following activities:

- met with you, senior and middle leaders
- held a meeting with four members of the governing body
- met the local authority representative
- met with a group of pupils to seek their views of the school
- reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and

improvement plans, and information about pupils' progress, the governing body and pupils' attendance. The school's single central record, pre-employment checks and safeguarding procedures were also reviewed

- scrutinised a number of pupils' workbooks
- scrutinised the school's website to confirm that it meets requirements on the publication of specified information
- considered 13 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 14 staff responses and 8 pupil responses to the online questionnaire
- visited lessons in all classes with you and the deputy headteacher.