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Mrs Judith Stone
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Stone

Short inspection of Cromer Road Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 13 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 March 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Prior to your appointment, the school had undergone a period of turbulence in leadership which affected the strategic direction of the school. Consequently, there was a delay in implementing the new national curriculum, which caused a dip in pupils' achievement. The results in the 2016 national assessments reflect this.

When you took on the role of substantive headteacher, you restructured your staffing arrangements, reviewed the school's financial budget and the special educational needs provision. Moreover, you successfully addressed weak teaching, which previously had an impact on pupils' progress and attainment over time. You and your deputy headteacher have put in place a clear system to track individual pupils' progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science to ensure that all pupils make good progress and that no pupils are left behind in their learning.

You and your leaders have dealt effectively with the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Class teachers have received training on teaching strategies and the use of assessment. You provide many opportunities for teachers to share good practice. Experienced, effective teachers are strong role models for those who are new to the profession. As a result, the quality of teaching is now consistently good across the school.

The previous inspection report identified the need to inform parents about the school's behaviour management procedures and assure them that behaviour issues are addressed promptly and effectively. You have set up a parent voice group, with parent representatives from each of the year groups, and hold regular meetings to discuss a range of matters. You and a member of the senior team are available at the gates every morning to meet and greet parents and pupils, which provides an opportunity to build positive relationships. The vast majority of parents say that they would recommend the school to another parent.

You have high expectations of yourself, staff and pupils, and acknowledge that there is more work to be done to secure further improvements. You agree with me that middle and high prior attainment groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, particularly at key stage 1, are not challenged sufficiently to make even better progress in writing and mathematics. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals is another area of priority.

Safeguarding is effective

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding procedures are robust and fit for purpose. Governors regularly check the single central record to make sure that it is in line with latest legislation and that adults are suitable to work with pupils.

There is a strong culture of vigilance to safeguard pupils. There are posters around the school providing information on who to contact, should any member of the school community need to raise a concern. Staff have received training on how to keep children safe in education, including the 'Prevent' duty. They can identify different situations where pupils may be at risk of danger, such as the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

Many pupils told me that they feel safe at school, both verbally and through Ofsted's online survey. Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils are taught how to stay safe through the curriculum, personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons, and assemblies, including how to become responsible citizens.

Most parents responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, say that their children are happy and safe at school.

The school is a very calm and purposeful learning environment. Pupils exhibit excellent attitudes to learning and are a credit to the school. This was evident during our visits to lessons. They listened attentively and showed respect for each other's views during our group discussion.

Inspection findings

- I began by evaluating leaders' actions to improve outcomes in writing for pupils, particularly girls and disadvantaged pupils, at key stage 1. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected and greater depth standards in

writing was well below the national average.

- Leaders have improved the way writing is taught across the school so that it makes a positive difference to pupils' progress. For example, teachers use high-quality children's texts to inspire and motivate pupils to write. This gives pupils the ideas for their writing. During our visits to lessons, I noted how well resources are used to facilitate pupils' writing. For example, pupils use 'word mats' to use ambitious vocabulary when describing a setting. Adults help pupils to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words such as 'lavish' and 'hideous'. This supports pupils' language development and helps pupils produce written work of a good standard.
- The work in pupils' books shows that all pupils, including girls and disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress and are writing at the standard expected for their age. However, we noted that the middle-ability girls and disadvantaged pupils are not sufficiently challenged to write at greater depth within the standard expected for their age. As a result, they do not make as much progress as they could in their writing.
- The next focus of the inspection was to consider the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve outcomes in mathematics, particularly for girls and disadvantaged pupils in the middle and high prior attainment groups at key stage 1. Last year, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who attained the expected standard and greater depth standard in mathematics was below that of other pupils nationally. Similarly, girls did not perform as well as their peers nationally in attaining both the expected and greater depth standards for their age.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve the mathematics curriculum. They have introduced explicit teaching of reasoning skills and have purchased new resources to support teachers to deliver this aspect of the curriculum well. The work in pupils' books shows that pupils, including girls and disadvantaged pupils, are given many opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems and explain their reasons well. We agreed that the most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Occasionally, these pupils are ready for a more challenging activity and have to wait. Some are ready for harder work sooner in lessons. This slows down their progress. As a result, they do not always reach their full potential.
- Another focus of the inspection was disadvantaged pupils' attainment in phonics at the end of Year 1. In 2016, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who met the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 was well below that of other pupils nationally. This had been the case for the last three years.
- Leaders have accurately identified this as an area for improvement. Teachers have received training to teach phonics with confidence and proficiency. Additionally, these pupils receive additional teaching, one-to-one support and additional teaching to improve their knowledge and use of phonics. During our visits to lessons, we noted that phonics was taught effectively during lessons and additional intervention sessions. The school's own assessment information shows that the large majority of disadvantaged pupils are on track to meet the expected

standards in the phonics screening check in 2017.

- Finally, I assessed how well leaders are improving attendance and persistent absence for those pupils who are eligible for free school meals and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because the attendance of these groups was below the national average last year. Likewise, persistent absence was high for these pupils.
- Leaders are using a range of strategies to improve attendance for all groups of pupils through incentives, such as individual and class certificates for 100% attendance. These initiatives are having an impact on improving attendance overall and reducing persistent absence. The attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is improving but remains slightly lower than the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils with middle prior attainment at key stage 1, particularly girls and disadvantaged pupils, are challenged sufficiently in their writing to work at greater depth within the standard expected for their age
- there are more opportunities for the most able pupils to be challenged in mathematics so that they achieve highly and make even better progress
- the attendance of pupils in receipt of free school meals improves so that it is in line with all pupils nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Rajeshree Mehta
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, four middle leaders and two governors. I went on three 'learning walks' with the headteacher and jointly scrutinised pupils' books during visits to lessons. I listened to pupils read from Years 1 and 2. I met formally with one group of pupils from key stage 2. I took into consideration 81 responses to Parent View, 44 free-text responses, 116 pupil survey responses and 48 staff survey responses. I scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including: the school's plans for improvement, the school's safeguarding documentation, assessment information on pupils' progress and information related to behaviour and attendance.