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Mr Richard Slade
Headteacher
Plumcroft Primary School
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Dear Mr Slade

Short inspection of Plumcroft Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 2017 with Paula Farrow, 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 the school was judged to be good in March 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and governors know the school well and share a desire for it to make a positive impact on the life of pupils. You and your team have built a strong community that encompasses staff, parents and the wider locality.

At the heart of the school's work is your drive to ensure that all pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, succeed academically. Governors, leaders and staff share your high aspirations. This drive is matched by leaders' ambition to widen pupils' access to enrichment opportunities in music, dance, art and sport. This is done through a broad and balanced curriculum and strengthened by links with local colleges and arts organisations. Leaders plan the curriculum carefully taking into account the needs and interests of the pupils. Pupils are happy to come to school and value the varied opportunities that they get – for example, playing in the school band for large audiences in town or the whole-school gymnastics festival.

Since the last inspection, leaders have taken effective action to continue to raise standards. This is particularly evident in outcomes in mathematics at the end of key stage 2. You and your senior leadership team have refined the assessment system and this is providing more rigorous processes that support teachers in making accurate assessment of pupils. Leaders and governors make effective use of assessment information to challenge each other and staff about how well pupils learn and achieve. Leaders agree that there is further work to be done to ensure that all pupils make substantial progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school has robust methods to ensure that pupils' welfare is protected. You and your staff know the vulnerabilities of families and individual pupils very well. Staff do everything they can to keep pupils safe. Safeguarding at the school is reflective of the culture of trust and care that leaders have created. Situations are dealt with in a sensitive yet timely manner. Record-keeping systems are fit for purpose. There is evidence that leaders' close partnership work with external agencies, including social services, has been effective in protecting pupils from harm. Vulnerable pupils have been well supported to achieve academically despite challenging personal circumstances.

You ensure that training for staff, governors and volunteers is a priority. Regular safeguarding updates at staff briefings and governors' meetings mean that staff and governors are vigilant to risks to pupils' welfare. Staff and governors are aware of their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty. You assess local risks in the community, working well with external partners such as the police to understand and minimise potential issues.

Pupils report that they feel happy and safe and are taught how to keep themselves from harm, including online. They trust that they can go to any adult to get help. Classrooms and corridors are calm spaces because pupils behave well and have good relationships with peers and adults. Parents who were surveyed during the inspection praised the caring nature of staff and pupils' behaviour. Bullying is rare and any incidents are well managed by the senior team.

Inspection findings

- The first key line of enquiry was to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions to improve reading outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in key stages 1 and 2. This key line arose due to a drop in achievement for pupils in key stage 1 to outcomes well below the national average. Inspectors looked into the progress these pupils make in key stage 2.
- The school's assessment information shows that typically these groups of pupils are making good progress over time, particularly in key stage 1. There is a whole-school coordinated approach to improving reading for all pupils including the disadvantaged, and this is clearly understood by leaders at all levels. This involves regular testing of pupils, matching texts to pupils' individual reading levels and close tracking of pupils' progress. The school has invested much in this area, including additional resources such as quality texts, rewards and additional adult support. As a result, pupils enjoy reading and this culture exists in all key stages. Pupils' reading ages have increased by at least one year in all year groups.
- I found evidence of clear systems to track pupils' progress and leaders engage in the process of drilling down into assessment information in pupils' progress meetings. As a result, disadvantaged pupils who are falling behind are spotted quickly. You and your staff plan additional support to help them catch up. Middle leaders have trained teachers and staff to support pupils in their reading

development. Pupils are building confidence in tackling unfamiliar words but some struggle with decoding independently. However, I found that the additional support that adults provide is not always well matched to pupils' needs. You recognise that this is due to a variation in the skill levels and subject knowledge of staff and volunteers.

- Next, inspectors evaluated the steps leaders have taken to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This was raised as an issue due to high absence and persistent absence rates for these pupils by the end of 2016.
- You have developed a robust, joined-up approach to improve pupils' attendance. I found you have effective systems in place to identify poor attenders and reduce the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent. Your strong partnerships with external agencies and families underpin your actions to tackle poor attendance. As a result, leaders and staff know families and their barriers very well, and offer tailored support.
- Your work to improve attendance for all groups of pupils is proving successful. The school's overall attendance continues to be in line with national figures. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is also now in line with the national average. Your actions to reduce persistent absence have resulted in a reduction for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Last year, persistent absence rates for this group fell significantly.
- The next line of enquiry focused on pupils' outcomes in reading and writing in key stage 1. In 2016, pupils' achievement at the end of Year 2 was below their peers nationally.
- In response to the disappointing 2016 key stage 1 outcomes, you and your team acted quickly to review the school's approach to the teaching of reading and writing. Leaders have high expectations of how well pupils achieve in reading and writing. Phase and middle leaders work well as a team to evaluate the impact of teaching and learning.
- Pupils' attitudes to reading and writing in key stage 1 are positive and they are well supported to improve in their literacy skills. Where outcomes are strongest, teachers have strong subject knowledge and clear expectations for learning. Teachers have an accurate understanding of pupils' needs and work well to meet them.
- Leaders are aware of the issues related to low writing outcomes in key stage 1 in 2016. They have addressed issues related to assessment with new systems for assessing, recording and tracking. These systems are used by all teachers. Pupils are making sustained progress in their writing skills and this improvement increases into key stage 2. There is, however, a need to ensure that some teachers routinely match assessment information precisely to what different groups of pupils need to learn next.
- Visits to classes and work in pupils' books show that pupils have phonics skills. However, I found that pupils do not routinely use their phonics knowledge to help them spell words accurately. This hinders pupils from making more substantial progress in their writing.

- Leaders agree that an earlier focus on application of phonics skills to spelling and writing, particularly between the end of key stage 1 and early key stage 2, will further improve outcomes for pupils by the end of Year 6.
- The final key line of enquiry was the impact of the school's curriculum on disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This key line was agreed with senior leaders because of the extensive work that the school has done since the last inspection, the progress achieved by these groups in 2016 in all subjects and provisional assessment information from 2017.
- The school's curriculum is a strength because of its inclusive nature and how well it is matched to the needs of its community. Leaders and staff organise a broad range of trips, clubs and wider opportunities that expose pupils to experiences that they would not normally have. Parents value this as a special aspect of the school.
- You have prioritised improving pupils' access to music tuition and ensured that the curriculum promotes healthy lifestyles. You and your staff go above and beyond to empower pupils and families in difficult circumstances. For example, pupils and parents are taken on guided London tours on weekends so that less confident families experience new places together.
- Disadvantaged and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive targeted opportunities to raise their self-esteem, develop talents, and achieve excellence and recognition in non-academic activities. Pupils are confident and love learning new things. They are excited to attend school, and are inspired to write and engage with the wider curriculum because it is engaging. The inclusive enrichment curriculum and the school's success in finding funding to sponsor or subsidise vulnerable pupils have enabled equal access. There is an increasingly high take-up of clubs and trips.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- in reading, the impact of additional support is evaluated precisely to ensure that it is tailored to pupils' needs
- pupils use their phonics knowledge routinely to help them record their ideas accurately.

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

Yours sincerely

Karla Martin-Theodore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors held meetings with you, senior leaders and middle leaders. We also met with the chair of the governing body, two other governors and a representative from the local authority. We looked at information about pupils' progress and the school's assessment of its performance. Attendance information was scrutinised and this was discussed with the attendance officer and special educational needs coordinator. We met with staff with responsibility for safeguarding and reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks on staff. We analysed 77 responses from parents and 38 responses from staff to Ofsted's online questionnaires. We listened to pupils read aloud and met with a group of pupils to discuss their experiences at the school. We visited classrooms in all key stages jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors visited phonics and English sessions jointly with senior leaders and interviewed you, phase leaders and the reading coordinator. We also looked at the school's own information for current pupils in reading and writing. Inspectors also looked at work in pupils' books and special books from the early years foundation stage.