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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Gerry D'cruz
Headteacher
Ashford Oaks Community Primary School
Oak Tree Road
Ashford
Kent
TN23 4QR

Dear Mr D'cruz

Short inspection of Ashford Oaks Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 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 May 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 lead the school with energy and total commitment. Relationships are strong. Staff at all levels are committed to improving the school and providing the best possible education for pupils. Leaders communicate well. The senior leadership team is particularly effective and respected by pupils and staff. You have complete faith in your team of phase leaders, whom you liken to 'pillars of strength' running through the school. One parent told me that you are 'one of a kind'. Others praised teaching and support staff, telling me that they feel that staff 'truly care' for their children.

Classroom visits showed the school to be a welcoming and happy place. Pupils enjoy coming to school. One pupil who has only recently arrived in key stage 2 told me excitedly how he is beginning to write for the first time, because teachers and his new friends are helping him. Children in Reception told me about how the 'maths monkey' helps them with their numbers. Pupils in Year 4 worked well together to improve their dictation skills. In Year 6, pupils were attentive to staff and respectful to each other. Year 5 pupils enjoyed their cricket lesson on the sports field, applauding and encouraging each other during the team game that ensued.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors highlighted the many strengths of the school, including staff and governors being united in their commitment to drive progress, the improving quality of teaching and pupils' good behaviour and pride in their school. They also identified the need for teachers to have consistently high

expectations, to offer appropriate levels of challenge for most-able pupils and to raise achievement in writing. Leaders have addressed these matters successfully. Classroom visits and scrutiny of pupils' work showed that teaching and support staff have appropriate expectations. Most work is pitched at the right level, including learning which is planned for the most able. Your work on improving pupils' achievement in writing has been partly successful. It is clear from the school's assessment records that strategies used since the last inspection to boost writing skills have been effective. However, recent assessments of pupils' progress in writing are disappointing and you have renewed your focus on this key aspect of pupils' work.

Since the last inspection, leaders have continued the process of self-evaluation. You were able to explain clearly the school's many strengths, as well as the priorities for development. These include your focus on further improving outcomes in writing. You have also identified that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds need to make better progress if their outcomes are to improve to match those of other pupils nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

Arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. Policies, procedures and systems are robust, and day-to-day routines are comprehensive. Importantly, the culture to safeguard pupils is strong. Pastoral support is a strength of the school. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to protect children. They know what to do if they have concerns.

Parents and pupils were positive about the levels of care and support available in the school. All parents whom I spoke to during the inspection feel that their children are safe in school. Replies to the parent and staff surveys, including parents' free-text responses, were 100% positive regarding the safety of pupils.

Inspection findings

- Children are making good progress from their different starting points in the early years. Leaders have recently focused on ensuring that systems to track children's progress are fit for purpose and accurate. This means that staff track progress in the early years well and are keenly aware of the strengths of individual children and of each cohort as a whole. This enables them to plan next steps in learning effectively. Children respond well to each other and to adults. They behave well, and most are confident when explaining their learning to visitors. Parents are positive about the progress that their children are making in the early years.
- School leaders are aware of the recent disparity in outcomes between reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in writing in key stage 2 is not as good as it could be. A renewed focus on planning relevant opportunities to write is beginning to have an impact on increasing pupils' interest and engagement in writing. Evidence seen in pupils' work shows that they are making better progress than in the recent past. This is especially the case for boys.
- Teachers provide for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds increasingly well.

Leaders and governors monitor the academic progress of this group effectively, and they have recently stepped up their focus because they realise that outcomes need to be better. Leaders monitor the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils closely. They are not afraid to change the way in which funding is spent in order to maximise its impact. Focusing leaders' time and staff resources to successfully improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is a good example of this. Of particular note is the reduction in the rate of persistent absence of this group, which was above 13% in 2016, but which is currently less than 5%.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils' progress in writing increases, so that writing outcomes are more consistent across the school and more pupils achieve at the expected standard by the end of Year 6
- the progress of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds accelerates at a quicker pace, so that their outcomes improve to more closely match those of other pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Close

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited classrooms, assessing the progress that pupils are making and talking to them about their learning. I observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and as they moved around the school. I met with senior and middle leaders, the chair and vice-chair of governors and a representative of the local authority. I also met formally with a group of pupils. I talked to parents at the start of the school day and took into account 17 replies to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire and accompanying text messages. I also took into account the 49 replies to the staff survey. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including pupils' progress information, the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, policies, minutes of governing body meetings and records of visits by the local authority.