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Mrs Annette Rook
Headteacher
Lawdale Junior School
Mansford Street
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Dear Mrs Rook

Short inspection of Lawdale Junior 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 November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

With your leadership team, you have maintained and built on the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Governors and staff share your ambition for the achievement and well-being of every pupil. Your commitment to providing pupils with a broad, balanced and engaging curriculum results in an excitement about learning that is evident throughout the school. You have established clear values and expectations that pupils understand and willingly follow, so that they always try their hardest in lessons. Pupils behave impeccably. They are kind and considerate to each other and talk about their school with pride.

You have continued to provide a well-maintained and resourced school which provides an attractive learning environment for pupils. During my visit, it was clear to see that the prevailing atmosphere is calm, happy and busy. Your school motto, 'Learning for Life at Lawdale', is apparent throughout the school. Pupils spoke warmly about the care they receive, saying, 'It is like a big family: we all get on and enjoy coming to learn'. Staff said that they feel valued and happy and many parents spoke positively about their children's happiness and the information they receive.

Your self-evaluation summary is clear and concise and you have correctly identified the school's key strengths and areas for improvement. The school development plan and the associated subject action plans are aligned closely to the self-evaluation

summary. Together they point to a school that has an ambitious vision for its pupils.

The governors act swiftly to implement change and improvement. They have an unwavering hunger for the school to be the best it can be and are increasingly effective in holding leaders to account for pupils' progress. Governors bring a wealth of experience and skills to the role. They display a strong commitment to the school community that creates a highly effective partnership with your leadership team. They provide the correct level of challenge to ensure that the school has a strong and realistic understanding of its strengths and areas of development.

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors identified the need to raise the number of pupils achieving the highest available levels in mathematics and reading. The school has responded well to these recommendations and has redesigned its mathematics curriculum to ensure that all pupils have sufficient challenge. This is having a strong impact on the outcomes for pupils. However, you and your team recognise there is still more to be done to achieve this in reading.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. You, your leadership team and governors have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of a high quality.

Your safeguarding team is highly effective in managing initial safeguarding concerns and referring them where relevant to external agencies. Checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are detailed and complete.

All staff have received training in keeping children safe and this has given staff the confidence to identify and report issues of concern. Staff have been trained in local and national priorities and are confident in identifying potential risks.

Pupils are very clear about the behaviour policy and are confident that staff deal with rare incidents of name-calling effectively.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed the key lines of enquiry to secure evidence that the school remains good.
- Attainment in mathematics and writing at the end of key stage 2 is above national averages. However, pupils' progress and attainment in reading at the end of Year 6 in 2016 and 2017 were below average, particularly for boys. Leaders have already identified improvement in reading as a priority across the school and not just for boys.
- You have put in place a number of measures to ensure that current pupils make better progress in reading. In lessons, teachers have developed a sharper focus on reading, supported by staff and volunteers who work effectively with small groups to meet pupils' individual needs. However, you agreed that more work remains to be done so that pupils make the progress of which they are capable in

reading by the end of key stage 2.

- When talking to pupils, especially in their guided reading sessions, they reported that they were sometimes unsure as to what they needed to do next to improve their reading skills. We agreed that this initiative needed further development in order to have greater impact.
- Leaders have purposefully developed boys' confidence and resilience in reading. They have undertaken a full audit, including a focus on library books, to ensure that the curriculum is well matched to include the interests of boys. Boys are encouraged to read widely across fiction and non-fiction and frequently express their new-found love of reading. One boy told me, 'We are lucky to have our library with so many new books that interest us.'
- We next looked at how leaders are ensuring that pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum. You and your leadership team continually review the quality of the curriculum. You decided that all pupils will study science as a distinct subject, where they have the opportunity to develop their investigative skills. Pupils enjoy devising and carrying out their own experiments and work in the books reflects this. In technology, pupils design and make exciting products, using a variety of skills, equipment and materials. Pupils talk animatedly about the many after-school clubs and educational visits available to them.
- Physical education (PE) is a particular strength of the curriculum. Your use of the PE and sport premium funding has been carefully planned to increase pupils' participation in sport as well as to improve teachers' skills in delivering PE. You have established an active sports partnership with an outside company, which gives pupils access to an even wider range of sports and games, for example skateboarding and table tennis.
- Work in books shows that a wide range of skills across the curriculum are being taught. When looking at how these skills are tracked and assessed it is clear that this is at an early stage of development. More work on this will ensure that a clear progression of skills is built on every year.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to develop a structured approach to the teaching of reading in order to improve pupils' progress, especially that of boys
- the systems for monitoring pupils' progress across the curriculum allow for the evaluation of skills achieved each year.

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

Yours sincerely

Michelle Thomas
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, senior leaders, a group of pupils, four governors and a representative from the local authority. I also spoke to parents before school. I jointly observed teaching with you and your leaders in all classes and I discussed the learning in pupils' books with you and other senior leaders. I also listened to pupils read.

I checked the school's website and examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, assessment information and the school development plan and safeguarding records. I took account of school responses from parents and I also considered 18 responses from staff and responses from pupils.