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15 December 2017

Alan Duffy
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Dear Mr Duffy

Short inspection of Sevenoaks Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 28 November 2017 with Mr Christopher Donovan, 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 April 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 have provided strong leadership and stability through a period of significant staff change while also relocating to a new school building. Parents appreciate how well the move was managed, and one commented, 'The transition from the old school to the new site was smooth with my children commenting on the positives of the new adventure and their excitement of attending school.' You have not been deflected in your relentless focus on the quality of teaching and learning and your care for the well-being of children and staff.

Your approach is that everyone matters and everyone is valued. Responses to the Ofsted online questionnaires for parents, staff and pupils are positive. One staff member said, 'This is the only school I have ever worked at where staff, as well as pupil well-being, is held in high regard and actively encouraged. I feel this is what sets this school apart from others.' Pupils are proud of their school and enthusiastic about their learning. One was keen to tell me, 'We are all equal and our teachers are all kind.'

Pupils achieve well at this school. Results at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 and provisional results for 2017 show that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined are

above the national average. Pupils make good progress from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2 in reading and mathematics. However, pupils' progress in writing is not as strong. Provisional results for 2017 show that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard and higher standard at the end of key stage 1 is above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Published outcomes for 2016 show that the proportion of children in the early years achieving a good level of development is above the national average.

Assistant headteachers and phase leaders bring considerable expertise and experience to the school. The impact of your leadership is clearly evident. All staff have a shared vision for excellence, and teamwork is strong.

You have successfully tackled the areas for improvement that were identified in the last inspection. For example, mathematics teaching stretches and challenges pupils of all abilities in lessons. Current pupils are developing their reasoning skills and their resilience to tackle more difficult work. Current Year 6 pupils were the first in the local authority to score 100% in a local 'maths race' competition.

As a result of improvements in the teaching of writing, pupils are making more rapid progress in writing in almost all year groups. Where the pace of improvement is slower, leaders have lost no time in providing extra support for teachers, to good effect. Pupils have many opportunities to use their skills in writing effectively in other subjects, such as science, history and geography.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your governors place a high priority on keeping pupils safe. The nurture and care you provide for individuals are strengths of the school's work. A parent summed this up, 'Although it is a large school, a real family feel is fostered – it is palpable.'

All staff understand safeguarding policies and procedures, resulting in early identification of concerns through well-established reporting systems. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

There are well-kept records showing how the school works closely with other agencies to protect pupils from neglect or abuse. Parents appreciate how staff 'go the extra mile' to support the whole family at times of crisis.

The challenge of maintaining site security and safety of pupils during the new school build and demolition of the old site has been managed successfully. Meticulous identification of risk during the process and close working with site managers has kept children safe.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, for example when working online on the computer. Workshops for parents on online safety have enabled them to help their children minimise risk.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look in particular at the following aspects of the school's work:
 - the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements
 - how well leaders have addressed the recommendation in the previous inspection report to improve further the challenge for most-able mathematicians and to narrow gaps in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils
 - the progress of current pupils in writing, and how well they use their skills and knowledge to write for different purposes across the wider curriculum
 - the effectiveness of leaders' work to improve attendance
 - how well the needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are being met.
- Pupils feel safe and said that they trust there is always an adult they can go to if they have concerns. While they reported that bullying is rare, they are proud to take on responsibility, such as that of 'anti-bullying ambassadors'.
- The recommendation in the last inspection report to ensure that pupils are given greater challenge in mathematics has been well met. By the end of key stage 2, the number of pupils working at deeper levels of understanding in mathematics was above the national average. Current pupils said that mathematics is exciting and demanding.
- The attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils are rising rapidly. A raft of measures has contributed to these improvements. These include more rapid intervention programmes and more emphasis on pupils' emotional well-being to help them overcome barriers to learning. Very specific targeted support and better training of support staff have also accelerated the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have introduced a more creative approach to writing, and there is evidence of rapid improvement in pupils' work, such as in spelling and the use of ambitious vocabulary. The use of good-quality texts to engage pupils, especially boys, in writing has been extended. As a result, pupils love to write independently and at length across a range of subjects. For example, Year 2 pupils wrote well-structured instructions after making models in design technology. In Year 6, pupils produced informative leaflets about rainforests following their work on tribes. Leaders are not complacent, however, and realise that some inconsistency remains in the standards of writing across the school. Support and training are in place for staff to raise achievement where progress is not rapid enough.
- Attendance overall is in line with national expectations, but attendance is lower for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. You have successfully built strong partnerships with outside agencies. This supports families in which children have medical conditions or difficult family circumstances which contribute to low attendance. Case-study evidence shows that the measures leaders have taken are working in individual cases. As a result,

attendance is improving to be close to national averages.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are quickly identified, and specific programmes target both their academic and their emotional needs. The new inclusion leader has established rigorous programmes to support these pupils, and tracks the impact of this support closely. As a result, the majority of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making strong progress in writing and mathematics.
- The governing body has been re-energised through the restructuring of existing committees and the appointment of new governors. Governors are passionate in their support for the school. They are knowledgeable about current legislation relating to keeping children safe in school and are keen to improve the effectiveness of their evaluation of school improvement priorities. These priorities are imprecise, however, and refinement of them would enable governors to evaluate the progress of school development more rigorously.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- greater consistency in teaching helps pupils to make better progress in writing by the end of key stage 2
- governors use clear and concise school improvement priorities to evaluate the school's effectiveness.

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

Lynda Welham
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, inspectors held several meetings with you and your senior and middle leaders. We also met with representatives of the governing body, scrutinised minutes of their meetings and looked at previous reports from the local authority representative. With you and other leaders, we observed the quality of learning in several year groups. We observed behaviour before school in the breakfast club, in lessons and in the playground. As well as talking to pupils in lessons, inspectors met with a group of pupils from the school council to talk about their experience of school. We analysed progress in pupils' books.

I considered a range of evidence, including the school's latest assessment

information, the school's priorities for improvement, leaders' self-evaluation, and safeguarding procedures and policies. Parents' comments were considered through informal discussions at the beginning of the school day, along with the 133 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also took account of responses to 49 staff questionnaires and 139 pupil questionnaires.