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Dear Mrs Phillips

Short inspection of Loddon Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 23 January 2018, 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 since the previous inspection. Despite significant changes to the school since then, you have not lost sight of the need to provide a good quality of education for all pupils. Since the previous inspection, you have established a new leadership team, and several new teachers have joined the school. At the same time, you and the governors have overseen a major building project in preparation for the expansion of the school to become a three form of entry primary school. You have also led the implementation of the new national curriculum and assessment arrangements.

Since joining the school as headteacher shortly before the previous inspection, you have created a culture and ethos of high expectations in which staff and pupils strive to do their best. This is seen clearly in the school's long-term vision that: 'Loddon's legacy will be that our children are confident and determined to make a positive difference to our ever-changing world.' You have empowered staff to take risks and to try new ideas that will be of benefit to pupils. A central feature of what the school provides is the 'values-based' education to which all stakeholders and pupils subscribe. This is reflected in the comment made by one parent who wrote: 'The school has given our children the joy of learning, while teaching them crucial values and skills.'

Pupils love school and say there is very little they would like to change. They feel safe in school owing to the high level of care provided by adults. They like their teachers and say that lessons are fun and interesting. This is shown in the vibrant

displays of pupils' work in classrooms and around the school, reflecting a broad and stimulating curriculum. Pupils also enjoy many of the trips and visits that support their learning and provide them with a wider view of the world. Pupils get on very well together and show respect towards the views and beliefs of those from backgrounds different to their own. They say that all pupils are treated equally and fairly and that discrimination on any grounds is not tolerated.

Since the previous inspection, you have strengthened the quality of teaching by providing extensive training and establishing the school as a learning community for staff and pupils alike. Pupils know what they are expected to learn and they take pleasure from trying out their own ideas. Senior and middle leaders have been very well trained to support less experienced staff and help them to become even better teachers. Your partnership with the university and local schools has opened up a wealth of opportunities for staff at all levels to learn from and share best practice, both within and outside the school. You know, however, that more needs to be done to help pupils make more progress with their writing by building their stamina to be able to write at length. Although pupils gain a good grounding in spelling, punctuation and grammar, you are aware that they do not routinely use these skills as much as they should when they write.

Safeguarding is effective

This aspect of the school's work is given high priority by governors and school leaders. You ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that detailed records are of high quality. You have a clear system in place that allows you to identify concerns promptly and to take action quickly. You keep fully up to date with all requirements by attending training and ensuring that your staff and governors are fully trained. As a result, all staff know exactly what to do should they have a concern that a pupil is at risk of harm. In the light of the school expansion, you have secured additional designated safeguarding officers. This means that, in your absence, there is always a trained leader on site who can deal effectively with any concerns. All visitors to school are carefully checked, and all staff who work in school have had the necessary checks made on their suitability to work with children.

Pupils know about different forms of bullying, including those related to modern technology. However, they say that bullying is very rare and that all adults would deal quickly with any problems that may arise. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, through various aspects of the curriculum and through themed assemblies. Parents, staff and governors agree that pupils are safe and well cared for in school.

Inspection findings

- In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils, we also agreed to look at:
 - how effectively phonics is taught in the early years and Year 1
 - the extent to which pupils, particularly boys, in key stage 2 make as much

progress as they should in writing

- provision and outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
 - how well leaders and governors have maintained a good standard of education during the expansion of the school.
- Pupils' attainment in phonics has fluctuated over the past three years, and you were disappointed with the results of the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017. As a result, you have made phonics a priority in the school improvement plan. The way in which phonics is taught has been reorganised, and pupils currently in Year 1 are on track to reach the standard expected. Pupils are grouped according to ability and are led by trained teachers and teaching assistants. Sessions are carefully planned with some imaginative approaches that capture pupils' interest and allow them to enjoy learning. Just occasionally, however, the most able pupils are provided with activities that they can already do and this prevents them from making even more rapid progress.
- In 2017, pupils did not make as much progress in writing when compared with all pupils nationally. Boys made less progress than girls and very few reached a greater depth in their writing. The new leader for English has taken action to raise standards in writing across the school. She has carried out an analysis of strengths and weaknesses and has an action plan in place showing how improvements are to be made. She has provided training to staff so that they now teach specific writing skills within a topic. Teachers also provide more opportunities for pupils to write in different subjects, and this is giving them more time to practise their skills. Boys in particular are making gains in their writing as a result of having a wider range of subjects to write about. However, some pupils still lack the stamina to write at length.
- Where the teaching of writing has been more successful, pupils show that they have a rich vocabulary that they use well to express their thoughts and ideas. They vary the way in which they structure their sentences to engage the interest of the reader. In some classes, they write to reflect on wider issues. For example, in one class, pupils wrote about aspects of Islam and compared it with their own religion. Apart from giving pupils a clear understanding of this faith, it also promoted their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. In some classes, pupils present their work to a high standard, demonstrating a sense of pride in their work.
- Current school data and work in pupils' books show that, in most year groups, pupils are making more rapid progress in writing. However, progress in writing still lags behind reading and mathematics and varies between classes and year groups. Work in some pupils' books is poorly presented, and in some classes pupils do not use their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar when they write. A few teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do, and allow basic errors to continue. Not all teachers comply with the school's policies by providing effective feedback to pupils that helps them to improve their writing, and so pupils do not progress as rapidly as they should.
- In 2016, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities did not make as much progress

as they should. The inclusion leader undertook a review of the way in which these pupils were taught. She provided training for staff and adjusted the provision made for these pupils. She introduced new tools to make a more accurate identification of pupils' needs. The inclusion leader has reviewed the level of support provided by teaching assistants both within and outside the classroom. She has checked that pupils are on the most effective intervention programme and adjusted this provision where progress is slower. As a result of actions taken, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress in reading and in mathematics.

- The inclusion leader has developed a clear system for recording pupils' special needs in a way that gives her a valuable overview of their needs. She works closely with the Nursery and Reception classes to spot children's difficulties at an early stage. The progress of these children is carefully checked so that actions can be taken to support those children at risk of falling behind. The inclusion leader has good relationships with external specialists such as speech and language therapists, and so she is able to provide the right support for pupils.
- The final line of enquiry that we agreed was to evaluate the extent to which leaders and managers have maintained a good quality of education while overseeing the expansion of the school and managing a large building programme. Over recent years, together with governors, you have established an effective senior leadership team who share the same values and ambitions as yourself. Leaders have been very well trained to take on their roles and so have increased the capacity for school improvement. They have supported colleagues to become even better teachers and have made a good contribution to the strategic development of the school. Governors report that staff at all levels have leadership roles, and that they prioritise the core work of the school and are not distracted by external pressures. Consequently, the school continues to provide a good quality of education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils develop a stamina for writing, using their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar in all aspects of their writing
- all teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils can do, and comply with the school's marking policy to provide effective feedback that helps pupils to develop their skills and so produce writing that is presented to the highest possible standard.

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

Yours sincerely

Joy Considine
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, with senior and middle leaders, and with a representative of the local authority. I also met with four governors, including the chair of governors. I observed the quality of learning in all year groups and I looked at work in pupils' books. I observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school. As well as talking to pupils in lessons, I met with a group of pupils from across the school to discuss their learning and how safe they felt in school.

I took into account a range of documentary evidence, including the school self-evaluation and improvement plan. I checked safeguarding procedures and child protection procedures and policies. I took account of the views of parents by analysing the 53 responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View. I also took account of the 19 responses to the staff survey.