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12 February 2018

Mr Colin Raraty  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Raraty

### **Short inspection of Rodings Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 30 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 June 2013.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Since your appointment in 2014, you have made clear your high expectations and are skilfully bringing about further improvements to the quality of provision at Rodings Primary School.

Parents and carers are overwhelming supportive of the work of staff and the school. For example, parents spoke of the balance between informality and respect and that between fun and academic rigour. One parent's comment that you have 'fostered a friendly, happy environment for children to develop and grow' was typical of the many positive views expressed. Inspection evidence confirms that you have successfully created a positive school ethos. Pupils are developing a sense of well-being and security and subsequently becoming confident in their learning and play. The ease with which pupils and staff interact is representative of the high levels of respect and care evident throughout the school.

It is a sign of your skilful leadership that, while you have brought about many changes to the school, you have also developed a successful and harmonious team. All staff who replied to the online survey agree they are proud to work at Rodings Primary School and almost all consider the school to be well led. Staff respond well to your high expectations and willingly contribute to the increasing momentum of school improvement. Several staff, including middle leaders, told me how senior leaders listen to their ideas and support adults in bringing about improvement.

The impact of your work can be seen in the significant improvements in the early years provision. Children make a good start to their education because adults model the behaviours they expect, implement the curriculum well and pay close attention to each child as they learn. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has increased sharply since the previous inspection and is now above the national average.

Your strategies to bring about continuous improvement are proving successful elsewhere. Every pupil achieved the expected standard in the phonic screening test in 2017. The proportions achieving the expected standard rose and were above the national average in reading and in line with national averages in writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1. The progress pupils made by the end of key stage 2 also increased and was in line with or above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics in 2017.

All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree the school is good at making sure pupils behave well. Pupils are also positive about the behaviour of their peers. They were able to explain how the school values are important to them in their daily life. For example, one pupil told me that being caring means that, 'when someone falls over, you go get them up'. Pupils behave very well. They are keen and increasingly resilient learners and relationships in lessons are characterised by good-humoured cooperation. Pupils are similarly well behaved at breaktime and lunchtime. Leaders have made sure pupils have wide assortment of activities available to them at these times and pupils make enthusiastic use of them.

Governors are dedicated to their work and share your commitment to school improvement. They take care to visit the school and check the quality of provision for themselves. Governors reflect upon their own work and, where they consider they need to improve, take action to do so. As part of this reflection, members of the governing body recognise they have not focused upon the progress pupils make across the broader curriculum with same precision as they have elsewhere.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders, including governors, successfully ensure that pupils' safety and welfare are given the highest priority. Pupils told me that adults are kind and look after them well. Almost every one of the 74 parents who responded to Parent View agree their children are safe and well cared for. All staff also confirm this to be the case.

Pupils can confidently explain the strategies they use to stay safe when using the internet and in other circumstances. They also demonstrate a good awareness of what bullying is. Pupils cannot recall an incident of bullying at their school. Inspection evidence, including staff and parent views, confirm that bullying is an extremely rare event and when it does occur it is dealt with well by school leaders.

As a result of appropriate training and regular updates, staff are alert to any changes in appearance or behaviour that may indicate a pupil could be vulnerable

or at risk. Adults know how to report any concerns they have and are confident leaders deal with concerns appropriately. Leaders' well-kept records demonstrate that when a pupil needs additional support they receive it in a timely way.

Governors are equally careful in carrying out their safeguarding duties. Governors gather the views of parents, pupils and staff to establish how effective the school is in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of pupils. The governing body also seeks external verification that school safeguarding processes are fit for purpose and effective. Governors ensure that any recommendations are acted upon swiftly. They also make sure the record of checks carried out on staff working at the school is up to date and appropriately maintained.

### **Inspection findings**

- My first line of enquiry was to establish the progress disadvantaged pupils make across key stage 2. This was because over the past two years, while disadvantaged pupils' progress has improved, it remains below that of their peers nationally. This was particularly the case in writing.
- Evidence in school indicates disadvantaged pupils now make good progress. This is because of the precise and well-judged support they receive. Leaders know the barriers to learning each pupil faces and use this information to put in place the most appropriate provision. This helps pupils make faster progress, and, where needed, secures their emotional wellbeing. For example, the school provides some pupils with counselling and also with one-to-one support in literacy and mathematics.
- Teachers are aware of each pupil's needs and plan learning accordingly. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, develop their writing skills effectively and appreciate your chosen 'tool kit' approach which they say helps them. For example, one pupil told me how much more confident he now was in using higher-level punctuation skills. However, leaders acknowledge there is still work to be done to ensure that more pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve the higher standards of which they are capable. Leaders have rightly made this a focus of their improvement work.
- My second line of enquiry was to determine how effectively leaders provide for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. This was because these pupils did not make the progress of which they were capable in 2016. In 2017, these pupils' progress improved and was in many cases good.
- The provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is increasingly well led. The SEN coordinator, while relatively new in her role, already has a detailed understanding of pupils' needs. She makes effective use of this information to put in place appropriate strategies for each pupil. She and other leaders then carefully monitor the progress pupils make and modify the support as required.
- Learning support assistants work effectively to assist pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities with their learning. For example, adults work closely with pupils to help them develop their fine motor skills, communication skills, and their confidence in writing and mathematics. Learning support assistants have positive

relationships with, and model the behaviours they expect from, pupils. Evidence indicates that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities continue to make good progress, often from very low starting points.

- My final key line of enquiry to ascertain if the school continues to provide good-quality education was to establish the progress pupils make across the broader curriculum. This was because in 2017 the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in science by the end of key stage 2 fell, and was below the national average.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that interests pupils and inspires them to learn. Pupils told me how they are able to influence the choice of topics they study. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning was evident in the lessons visited and the animated way in which they described their work on heroes and villains, the Titanic and islands.
- Where teachers implement the curriculum effectively, pupils respond exceptionally well, using their literacy and numeracy skills alongside those required in subjects such as history and science. When this is the case, pupils make good and sometimes better progress. For example, pupils in key stage 1 used their literacy skills well to describe the influence of Florence Nightingale.
- However, not all teachers are adept at planning and implementing learning activities that enable pupils to achieve as well as they could. In some classes, the teachers' high expectations, so clearly evident when delivering and assessing English and mathematics activities, are less transparent in their teaching of other subjects. In these classes, pupils' progress in some subjects, such as science, slows.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- governors have a greater awareness of, and challenge leaders effectively on, the progress pupils make across the broader curriculum
- leaders monitor pupils' progress across all subjects with the same precision which they do in English and mathematics
- teachers apply the same high expectations of what pupils could and should achieve in all subjects.

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

Yours sincerely

John Lucas  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

- I held discussions with you about the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, leaders' evaluation of the quality of education, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' learning.
- I met with other senior leaders, five subject leaders and the chair of governors together with five other governors.
- Documents such as the school's improvement plans; leaders' monitoring and analysis of the progress pupils make; pupil premium reports; and the school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined.
- Together with you, I observed children and pupils learning in several classes. We looked at examples of pupils' work to explore the progress they are making over time.
- I spoke formally with two groups of pupils. I also spoke with others informally during lessons regarding their learning.
- I considered the views of parents I spoke with at the start of the school day. I took into account the views of 74 parents who responded on Parent View and of the 51 parents who left comments on the Parent View free-text service. I also considered parents' views expressed in the school's own surveys.
- The views of 44 staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire were also taken into account.