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Mr Geoffrey Allen
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Allen

Short inspection of Maple Grove Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 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 Maple Grove was judged to be good in March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You and your team have the confidence and support of staff. As a result, all members of staff who responded to the online survey agreed that the school is led effectively, that they are well supported and that they enjoy working at the school.

Governors have a clear and detailed understanding of their strategic role in the school. They carry out their role effectively and undertake regular monitoring activities. These are used by the governors, alongside a range of other evidence, including internal and external reports, to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. As a consequence, governors are able to hold leaders to account well for the quality of education and progress that pupils make. The leadership of the governing body is very stable, with both the chair and vice chair of governors having been in place since the opening of the school in September 2008.

The behaviour of pupils around the school and in lessons is calm and purposeful. This is because pupils are respectful to staff. Pupils told the inspector that they are kind to each other. One child described how, 'In this school we accept everyone for who they are and the teachers help us all. We do not tolerate bad behaviour.' Pupils also have a clear understanding of what bullying is and know what to do if it occurs. As a result, almost all parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved.

You and the governors consider that there is an explicit link between the improvements in pupils' behaviour and the school's introduction of your chosen values-based education. Your records show that now good behaviour is the norm, and pupils, parents and staff agree that behaviour at the school is good.

Pupils spoke about how they regularly participate in competitive sports, and are encouraged to be both physically and emotionally healthy. They enjoy using the school's new all-weather running track, as well as the breadth of clubs available at lunchtimes and after school, ranging from football and street dancing to reading and learning the ukulele. Leaders and governors ensure that regular trips and visitors also enhance the curriculum, such as the visit by the police officer to the Nursery class on the day before the inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school takes its duty of care responsibilities very seriously and leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Safer recruitment procedures are followed and all necessary pre-employment checks are in place. Staff have completed appropriate training, in line with current legislation, and apply this training effectively to their daily work. As a result, staff know their responsibilities and what to do if they have any concerns.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Records of safeguarding incidents are detailed. They show that you make timely referrals and work closely with specialist agencies to keep pupils safe. Consequently, almost all parents who completed Parent View agreed that their children feel safe and are well looked after in school.

Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They are able to clearly articulate how well they receive regular teaching and events on internet safety that provide them with ways to keep safe when using online technology. Pupils could identify a member of staff who they would be happy to speak with if they were worried or concerned. Pupils appreciate that staff help them learn to stay safe in and outside school, for example by organising additional trips so pupils can learn about safety around the home.

Inspection findings

- To confirm that the school remains good, my first line of enquiry focused on outcomes for pupils in the early years and Year 1. This is because there had been a great deal of variation in pupils' achievement in both 2016 and 2017. Outcomes for children in Reception and pupils in Year 1 had improved in 2017, and I wanted to consider whether the improvement had sustained.
- In the early years, children have access to a wide range of stimulating activities to develop their passion for learning. For example, in the Nursery class, I observed how the children were very interested in finding out more about the police as part of their 'People who help us' topic.

They concentrated for extended periods of time because they enjoyed using paint to create finger print patterns on paper and examine them with magnifying glasses, as well as counting out bricks to match the numbers on the police hats.

- Outcomes for pupils have improved. In 2017, overall standards rose in the phonics screening check. In key stage 1, overall standards in reading and mathematics have also improved. Nonetheless, you, the governors and the local authority recognise that there needs to be greater opportunities for the pupils to write in the early years and key stage 1 so that more can make good progress from their starting points to reach the nationally required standard.
- In 2016, pupils' attendance was lower than their peers nationally. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also had very low rates of attendance. Equally, persistent absence, where a child has missed 10% or more of their schooling, was much higher than nationally. This informed my second line of enquiry.
- You have made marked improvements in raising attendance and reducing persistent absenteeism. You check and analyse the attendance information for pupils thoroughly. You continually raise parental awareness of the importance of attendance, as well as working with other agencies to support families who need help. Your work supporting those families who require additional help is effective at raising attendance, especially for those pupils who are disadvantaged or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Your breakfast club is well attended and pupils benefit from a structured start to their school day. Even so, you acknowledge that more can still be done to increase attendance so that it is in line with national averages.
- My final line of enquiry concerned standards in mathematics by the end of key stage 2. This is because a larger proportion of middle ability pupils reach expected standards in maths at Maple Grove than their peers nationally. I wanted to be sure that the school was successfully sustaining the high attainment of this group of pupils and extending this success to other groups. The provision for maths is strong across key stage 2. There is clear, age appropriate development of all pupils' mathematical skills as they progress from Year 3 to Year 6. You and governors correctly link this development to the implementation of your chosen approach to teaching and learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the school works even more effectively with families so that the attendance for groups of pupils improves and is at least in line with national
- there are greater opportunities for pupils to effectively develop their skills in writing in the early years and key stage 1.

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

Yours sincerely

James Adkins

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, your deputy headteacher and your inclusion co-ordinator, who is also the designated safeguarding lead. I also met with the chair and the vice chair of the governing body as well as a representative of the local authority.

Together we visited each key stage 2 classroom to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics over time. I also visited the early years and key stage 1 to consider the quality of education. I spoke with pupils during their lessons and formally met with a group of pupils. I reviewed the standard of pupils' work both in lessons and from a sample of books.

I considered the school's information about attendance and persistent absenteeism and the school's effectiveness in safeguarding its pupils. I scrutinised a wide range of documentation such as the school's analysis of their own performance and areas for improvement.

I also considered 35 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) together with their responses on the 'freetext' service, 11 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and 28 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.