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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mr Paul Quinton
Headteacher
Caroline Haslett Primary School
Faraday Drive
Shenley Lodge
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK5 7DF

Dear Mr Quinton

Short inspection of Caroline Haslett Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 6 February 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 last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress has accelerated rapidly. The majority of pupils, including those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, many pupils achieve standards above those expected for their age. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment has also risen considerably.

Pupils appreciate the friendly, happy atmosphere at Caroline Haslett Primary School, where pupils help each other. They take pride in their work and display positive attitudes to learning. Pupils behave well. They enjoy the many opportunities that are available to them, including a wide range of after-school activities and sporting events. Parents and carers value the inclusive culture that permeates throughout the school, with one commenting, 'They have the finger on the pulse for every child.'

You provide enthusiastic leadership. Your clear vision for the school, 'Nil satis nisi optimum. Nothing but the best is good enough,' is shared by leaders and governors alike. Parents recognise the high standards you set for pupils and staff.

Following recommendations from the school's previous inspection, you have worked successfully to develop the skills of school leaders at all levels. They are knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility and have taken effective action to improve performance further. This has accelerated the rate of improvement across the school. Officers from your local authority use your knowledge and expertise to support other local schools to improve further.

The previous inspection report asked leaders to ensure that teachers match tasks to the needs of different groups of pupils, especially the most able. The commitment and enthusiasm of the staff team ensure that pupils receive well-planned, challenging lessons, resulting in high outcomes for all groups of pupils. In Year 6, in 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average. Furthermore, the progress these pupils made in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly above the national picture. You have also rightly been working on improving teachers' knowledge of assessment across the whole curriculum to improve outcomes even further, especially for the most able pupils.

Governance is strong. Governors are skilled and committed, with an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. They have ensured that the school's finances have been well managed, making difficult decisions about staffing when necessary. Governors undertake regular visits to the school to validate what they have been told. This includes the successful governors' tea parties, where they speak to pupils about various aspects of school improvement. They use what they find out to question you effectively.

Leaders have identified precisely the school's main strengths and those areas that could be further improved. You are aware that levels of challenge in the early years could be even stronger. You are also extending the strong assessment practice for reading, writing and mathematics to include all subjects in the curriculum.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's leaders and governors fulfil their statutory safeguarding duties well. Policies and procedures are fit for purpose and the day-to-day routines are secure. Any necessary actions are completed without delay and are followed up in an efficient manner. The safeguarding team works successfully with external agencies. Pre-employment checks demonstrate leaders' thorough action in ensuring the suitability of all staff and volunteers to work in school. Safeguarding training is regular.

Pupils said that they feel very safe in school. They demonstrate a strong understanding of equality and the different types of bullying. They told me that there is hardly ever any bullying and that, if it was to happen, teachers would, 'sort it'. All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, reported that their children are safe in school. As one parent commented, 'The staff are friendly and approachable and make the school a safe and welcoming environment for my child to learn.'

I visited the school on Safer Internet Day. Pupils with responsibility for leading computing in the school ran an assembly about online safety. They also had the opportunity to teach online safety lessons to the rest of the school. Pupils I spoke to showed a thorough understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed that the focus for my investigations would be on effective challenge for pupils across the curriculum; how well leaders have improved the progress pupils make in key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics; and the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils throughout the school.
- Teaching across the curriculum is highly effective. Teachers use questioning extremely successfully to challenge the most able pupils to make rapid progress. During my visits to lessons and while looking in pupils' books, I saw clear evidence that teachers routinely challenge pupils across the curriculum. For example, in history books, I saw how leaders have ensured that historical enquiry is at the heart of the history curriculum. This resulted in pupils being challenged to ask questions, and to select and evaluate evidence to make their own judgements. However, we agreed that some activities in the early years lacked sufficient challenge to stretch the most able children. These children would benefit from being expected to complete more activities at a higher level.
- Senior and middle leaders work closely with teachers and staff to ensure that the quality of teaching in key stage 1 is at the highest level possible. Leaders have introduced new teaching strategies focusing sharply on reading skills. Pupils' work indicates that this new approach is beginning to have an impact, especially on the ability of key stage 1 pupils to infer and deduce information from a text. Pupils' writing books show rapid progress, including in the application of phonics and their stamina for writing. Mathematics teaching has also been reviewed to ensure that there are increased opportunities for pupils to reason and problem-solve in their lessons. As a result, pupils' understanding is deep, and progress is strong. Pupils I spoke to in lessons could successfully explain their mathematics learning using precise and increasingly complex mathematical vocabulary.
- Leaders and governors have used additional funding for disadvantaged pupils very well. As a result, their attainment by the end of Year 6, in 2017, was better than that of other pupils nationally in writing and mathematics. The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is as strong as their classmates. Staff accurately identify pupils' individual needs and their progress is monitored thoroughly. Leaders analyse assessment information carefully to ensure that no pupil is left behind. Pupils who are in danger of falling behind, or those that need extra support or extension, are supported very well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further develop the opportunities for challenge in the early years

- teachers apply their strong understanding of what progression looks like in the core subjects to pupils' learning in the foundation subjects, to ensure that an increasing proportion of pupils reach the higher levels across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy to discuss the school's effectiveness. Together, we visited lessons to observe pupils' learning, speak to pupils and look at their work. Alongside middle leaders, we assessed the quality of pupils' work in books. I met with seven governors, including the chair of the governing body, and spoke to pupils about their school. I considered 67 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire and the accompanying free-text comments. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. Staff questionnaires were also considered. I met with a representative from the local authority. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of documentation, including your self-evaluation, pupils' progress information, attendance information and policies, was examined.