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Mrs Angela Wilson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Wilson

Short inspection of Lawn Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 November 2017, 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 March 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 lead the school with commitment and determination to provide the best possible learning experiences for pupils. Staff are proud of the school, enjoy working there and have every confidence in your leadership. They feel they are treated fairly and with respect. Staff and governors share the ambition to improve the school further. You have the expectation that all staff and governors subscribe to your belief that every pupil can achieve. You have maintained the quality of teaching and learning despite the challenges created by some staffing difficulties. Where weaknesses have been identified, effective support is provided and improvement is expected.

The school has recently joined in a formal collaboration with the Northfleet Schools Co-operative Trust, which consists of two secondary schools, three primary schools, an infant school, a junior school and a nursery. You welcome this opportunity to work in partnership with local schools to further improve the quality of teaching and learning, enhance opportunities for pupils and adults, and share resources and expertise.

Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. In discussions, they were hard pressed to think of anything they would like to change. They said they like their teachers and make good friends at school. Staff agree that you have created a culture of calm and orderly conduct. Most pupils agree that the school encourages

them to respect people from other backgrounds and to treat everyone equally.

At the time of the previous inspection, inspectors highlighted the strengths of the school, including the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and governors' work in forging effective partnerships within the whole school community. Inspectors identified the need for improving attainment by the end of key stage 1, particularly by providing pupils with more opportunities to use their mathematical skills. They also wanted leaders to make more effective use of the information on how well pupils are doing, so that they made better progress.

You have worked hard to make sure that, from often very low starting points, pupils are making better progress in key stage 1. Pupils' attainment at key stage 1 varies from year to year and more recently has been improving. In 2016, for example, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard by the end of Year 2 was broadly in line with that found nationally in reading and mathematics. The proportion that achieved the expected standard in writing was above that found nationally. The Year 2 group in 2017 had significant challenges and needs and starting points that were particularly low. You correctly acknowledge that this group should continue to receive substantial support and close monitoring to catch up as quickly as possible.

Leaders and governors conduct a range of monitoring that effectively identifies current priorities. These priorities inform the school's development plan for further improvement. We agreed that, as well as end-of-year targets, milestones at points throughout the year should enable you and governors to evaluate the ongoing success of your actions, or if any new direction needs to be taken. These deadlines have the potential to increase the pace of improvement. You know there is more work to do to strengthen pupils' attainment, and that some pupils need to make very rapid progress to catch up.

Safeguarding is effective.

Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pastoral support is a strength of the school and there is a culture of care and support for all, and particularly for those who may be vulnerable. Staff identify and monitor such pupils well. There are good links with external agencies so that pupils receive timely help and support when necessary. Policies, procedures and systems are fit for purpose. Training for the designated safeguarding leaders and all staff is up to date. Staff know they are all responsible for pupils' well-being and safety, and know what to do if they have any concerns.

There were very few responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. However, in the school's own survey, conducted earlier this year, parents were positive about the care and support their children receive and felt that children are safe in school. In the pupils' survey, the very large majority who responded said they feel safe in school, as did those pupils I spoke to throughout the day. All staff agree that pupils are safe.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to focus on pupils' progress in reading and mathematics compared to that in writing; pupils' progress in key stage 1, particularly that of boys and their achievement in phonics; how well the curriculum supports the learning of all groups; how well children in the early years catch up from their starting points; and the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- Progress from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2 in 2017 in reading and mathematics was not significantly different from that found nationally. However, progress in writing was much stronger and well above average. Pupils, and particularly boys, respond well to the school's approach to writing, which gives them opportunities to talk about their writing before putting their ideas down on paper.
- You have taken positive action to improve progress in reading and mathematics. With two other primary schools, the school is part of a four-year 'maths mastery' project with The Goldsmiths' Company. The project carries substantial funding. A mathematics specialist works in your school with a strategic role for at least two days a week. There is a focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning across key stages 1 and 2. Although just started in September, the impact of this project is already evident. Teachers are willing to take on the new initiatives and pupils are more confident in taking risks in learning. As a result, progress is improving. A group of pupils in Year 5, working on division, agreed with one who said, 'Getting it wrong means you're learning, getting it right means you have knowledge.'
- You have also initiated action to renew the focus on reading for enjoyment at key stage 2. Staff are getting the most out of guided reading sessions to develop pupils' comprehension skills, use of inference and reading stamina. An external consultant is supporting staff. As a consequence, reading progress is improving in most year groups. In Year 1 and Year 5 in particular, pupils are making rapid progress.
- You are keenly aware that, while most pupils successfully achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check, they lacked a range of other strategies to help them read. Often, they unnecessarily sound out words that they can read fluently, or get stuck if sounding out does not help. Again, you have ensured that there is effective support for teachers to broaden the range of reading strategies they teach.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Staff work hard to plan topics that inspire and interest all pupils. As at the previous inspection, disadvantaged pupils continue to make similar progress to others. You acknowledge that there is scope in the curriculum to provide more challenge to pupils of all abilities to reach greater depth of skills, knowledge and understanding, and have set targets to achieve this.
- The school improvement plan outlines a clear agenda to support the most important needs that you have identified. However, it lacks tight deadlines and targets to drive the pace of improvement.

- Your improvement plan includes your actions to close the gap in attainment between boys and girls in the early years, as the trend shows that girls do better than boys. Children make steady and often rapid progress from their starting points, which are often well below those typical for their ages. Leaders acknowledge that the outdoor areas need further development to maximise opportunities for learning in all areas.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attainment in reading and mathematics improves so that more pupils' reach at least the expected standards by the end of Year 6
- more pupils achieve learning at a greater depth
- there are tight deadlines and targets throughout the year to improve the pace of improvement.

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

Margaret Coussins
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and one of your deputy headteachers to discuss your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness, your checks on the quality of teaching and the aspects to focus on during the inspection. I also met with other senior leaders. I met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and the local authority's school improvement adviser. Too few parents responded to Ofsted's parent survey, Parent View, or provided comments to enable me to draw any conclusions from their views. However, I took account of your own survey of parents conducted earlier this year. I took account of 16 responses to the pupil survey and 26 responses to the staff survey. You and your deputy headteacher accompanied me on my visits to classes. During these visits, I spoke to pupils about their learning, listened to some pupils read and looked at their work. We discussed our findings from these visits. I observed pupils and spoke to different groups during lunchtime. I reviewed the school's website and sampled a range of documents and records including: information about pupils' achievement; the school improvement plan; and documents relating to safeguarding.

