

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



16 March 2018

Mr Nick Fry
Headteacher
Thames Ditton Junior School
Mercer Close
Thames Ditton
Surrey
KT7 0BS

Dear Mr Fry

Short inspection of Thames Ditton Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 6 March 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 March 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. 'A place to learn, a place to grow' is the motto underpinning the school's work. You, your staff and governors have created a vibrant learning community that provides a nurturing and caring environment for pupils. A large number of parents and carers commented on the friendly and approachable manner of all staff. One parent reflected the views of many by writing, 'Thames Ditton Junior School is a warm and welcoming school where children flourish.'

You provide the school with a clear direction so that staff and governors work closely together to secure the best possible learning experiences for pupils. You have created an ethos based on values including determination, respect and honesty. One of the strengths of the school is the rich and vibrant curriculum that stimulates pupils and inspires them to do their best. This is reflected in high-quality displays in classrooms and around the school. The quality of pupils' art is high and shows a depth of teaching that fully develops pupils' talents and skills.

Pupils behave very well in classrooms, in the playground and when moving around the school. You and your staff have a thorough knowledge of individual pupils and ensure that they progress well socially as well as academically. This is reflected in another of the many comments made by parents: 'As well as providing a good level of academic teaching, I believe the school strongly promotes personal development, emphasising the strong core values and helping to create well-rounded pupils.'

You, together with other leaders and governors, know the school well. You have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and know exactly where further improvements are needed. You have taken action to ensure that the good quality of teaching and learning is maintained. You have introduced a programme of peer observation where teachers visit each other's classrooms to share ideas and learn from each other. As part of the Ember Learning Trust, this activity has been extended so that all staff and governors visit each other's schools to develop a shared approach to school improvement. This supports all schools within this cooperative partnership to improve further.

Pupils are happy and they enjoy school. They particularly appreciate the rich and stimulating curriculum and the wide variety of additional activities that enrich their experience of school. They say that they have trips and visits and that there are plenty of after-school clubs available for them. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that adults listen to them and take their concerns seriously. They have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well. Pupils are very well mannered, polite and friendly. They say that they are all treated equally and fairly and that there is no discrimination. One parent wrote, 'At dinnertime yesterday, my son said, "You should write something really nice because I LOVE my school".'

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have developed a culture of self-improvement in which teachers are reflective and continuously seek new ways of developing their skills. You have further developed the role of subject leaders so that they are accountable for the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. You know, however, that more needs to be done. You know that pupils, particularly girls, need to make more progress in mathematics and actions have been put into place to achieve this.

In the 2017 national tests, disadvantaged pupils in year 6 did not achieve as well as other pupils. You and your leaders are taking steps to diminish remaining differences. However, the current system for recording and tracking pupils' outcomes does not demonstrate the in-year rates of progress pupils make. Consequently, it is difficult to check pupils' progress and intervene early enough when their progress is slow.

Safeguarding is effective

Staff and governors have an acute understanding of the need to keep pupils safe in school. They undertake regular training to keep themselves up to date with all new requirements. There are clear systems in place for staff to record any concerns they may have that a pupil may be at risk from harm. The designated safeguarding lead diligently follows up these concerns with the appropriate authorities to ensure that pupils and their families receive the help and support they need. All visitors to school are carefully checked, and systems to check the suitability of staff to work with children are detailed and well maintained. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are efficiently kept.

The vast majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted's online survey Parent View agreed or strongly agreed that their children enjoy school and that they are happy, safe and well looked after.

Pupils say they feel safe in school. They have a thorough understanding of how to stay safe when using modern technology and spoke knowledgeably about a recent internet safety day. They know about different forms of bullying and, while they knew of incidents that had occurred, they were confident that all would be dealt with rapidly by staff. Pupils said that other pupils usually behaved well in school and that they were taught how to resolve issues. They understand the school's values and agreed that these help them to learn and develop personal qualities that prepare them well for the future.

Inspection findings

- In addition to evaluating the school's arrangements for safeguarding, we also agreed to focus specifically on the following aspects of the school's work:
 - pupils', especially girls', outcomes in mathematics
 - provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
 - the extent to which the leaders and governors have addressed the issues for improvement identified in the previous inspection.
- The most recent statutory assessment information shows that, at the end of year 6, in 2017, pupils' progress in mathematics was below average and that girls made less progress than boys. The mathematics leader reorganised the way in which mathematics is taught so that pupils are now taught within their class rather than in ability groups. He has researched different approaches to the teaching of mathematics with a view to providing pupils with more opportunities to learn and apply their skills through solving real-life problems. In lessons, teachers provide pupils with plenty of time to discuss their thinking and this is helping girls in particular to grow in confidence. Teachers are skilled at identifying any misconceptions in pupils' responses to questions, and this enables pupils to develop their understanding well. A further strength of teaching mathematics is the way in which pupils have to explain their ideas; this deepens their mathematical reasoning and mastery.
- All teachers are very aware of the need to ensure that girls improve their outcomes in mathematics. They direct specific questions to girls and they make sure that seating arrangements allow girls to respond to teachers' questions with confidence. During the inspection, girls readily took part in lessons and made progress at rates similar to boys. Work in pupils' books shows very little difference between girls and boys in mathematics. Work in most books seen shows that there is not always a high-enough challenge for all pupils. It was evident that, at times, pupils are not provided with more difficult work when they are ready to move on.
- Senior leaders and governors know that disadvantaged pupils, although few in number, sometimes do less well than other pupils. You have extended the role of a senior leader, who now has oversight of the learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils. She has identified their specific barriers to learning and so

provides support to help them to overcome their difficulties. The pupil premium leader knows that some of these disadvantaged pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, while others lack confidence, as a result of their social and emotional needs. Some disadvantaged pupils are provided with additional help in class to boost their confidence, and this is leading to improvements in their participation in school life.

- All teachers are held to account for the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. The pupil premium leader visits pupils in classrooms so she has a good view of how well these pupils are learning. She regularly looks at work in their books and will make sure that disadvantaged pupils are on track to reach their targets. However, current systems for recording and tracking pupils' progress do not enable leaders to evaluate pupils' progress at key points in the school year. Consequently, it is not always easy to check that pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, are making as much progress as they should in the short term.
- You have built on the strengths identified in the previous inspection to maintain a good quality of education for pupils. You have worked closely with staff and governors to create a long-term plan showing how the school will continue to develop. You have provided good-quality professional development to help teachers improve their skills further. This has created a culture in which staff are confident and thrive on the challenge of becoming even better teachers. You have developed the role of subject leaders so that they are held to account for the quality of teaching and the outcomes for pupils in their particular subject.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in all classes are provided with appropriate stretch and challenge in their mathematics lessons
- there are systems in place that record and track pupils' in-year progress from their starting points.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Surrey. 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 school leaders, governors and pupils. I had a telephone conversation with an external adviser who has worked with the school. I met with a small group of parents and I took into account 212 responses to the online survey Parent View. I also considered the many written comments that parents had recorded on free text. Together, we visited eight mathematics lessons to observe pupils learning. I looked at work in pupils' books and I spoke to them about their learning in mathematics. I took into account a range of documentation, including your reports to governors, your own evaluation of the school's performance as well as information showing how the school ensures that pupils are kept safe.