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Mrs Claire Foad  
Headteacher  
Shepherd Primary School  
Shepherd's Lane  
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Rickmansworth  
Hertfordshire  
WD3 8JJ

Dear Mrs Foad

### **Short inspection of Shepherd Primary 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 February 2014.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Leaders and governors have successfully managed a period of considerable change as Shepherd Primary has grown to become a two-form-entry school. This process has called upon the strategic planning skills of leaders and governors. The management of change has been effective and has not distracted leaders from the important focus of sustaining strong teaching to ensure that pupils achieve well.

Children make a positive start in the high-quality early years provision and continue to make good progress as they move through the school. Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 are improving year-on-year, so pupils are well positioned to move on to their next phase of learning by the time they leave Year 6.

You and your capable leadership team have established an expectation that everyone is accountable for the difference their actions make. Your staff value and make good use of the supportive opportunities you provide to develop their practice. They are proud to work at the school. Consequently, there is a strong spirit of teamwork among the staff and a positive atmosphere around the school.

Pupils are polite and courteous. They quickly grow in confidence through the many opportunities they are given to develop their independence. For example, in the Reception classes, children were seen happily sharing equipment, organising themselves and choosing the resources they needed to complete their activities.

Older pupils talked positively about the leadership roles they are given, for example becoming physical education (PE) ambassadors or play leaders to help the younger pupils at breaktimes. They told me that these extra jobs 'help us to grow up to be responsible and kind'. Pupils understand and uphold the school motto, 'achieving together'. They explained: 'We work together as a team and help each other to do the best we can.'

In lessons, pupils behave well and work hard because relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Additionally, you and your leaders have developed a rich and stimulating curriculum with topics that capture pupils' imagination and stimulate them to want to participate and learn more. The curriculum is enhanced by visits and special events that broaden pupils' experiences.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Many of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to other parents. They appreciate and value the practical workshops and regular invitations to come into school and work alongside their children. Parents say that this helps them to understand how they can support their children's learning at home. One parent's comment reflected the views of many: 'My child enjoys going to school and looks forward to learning every day. The school is led very well and the teachers are very helpful.' Another captured the positive views of parents by saying: 'The teachers are very open to listening to parents and addressing any concerns we might have, and the school has a very friendly and caring feel to it. I would absolutely recommend this school.'

The school benefits from the strong team of governors. They appreciate the hard work of staff but, equally, are not afraid to challenge where necessary. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require further improvement through their regular visits to the school and the reports they receive from senior and middle leaders.

You, the governors and the staff team strive to keep improving the school. Together, you have addressed successfully the areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection. For example, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching by making sure that the most able pupils are given tasks that challenge them in their learning. You have ensured that, as a result of high-quality teaching pitched at the correct level, the most able pupils are achieving well across all subjects.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and there is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. Leaders make sure that staff and governors receive regular and up-to-date training. Consequently, everyone understands clearly their responsibilities for pupils' safety and welfare and carries them out with care and diligence. Where appropriate, leaders seek advice from experts beyond the school to support individual pupils and families who may need extra help.

This meticulous approach is supported well by effective systems, including the rigorous checks that are carried out on all adults before they are allowed to start working or volunteering at the school. Governors monitor closely all safeguarding policies and practice to ensure that they are completed thoroughly.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are confident that adults will help them with any worries they may have. Pupils told me that there is very little bullying in the school and that the adults 'sort out any problems quickly'. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online.

Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, unanimously agreed that their children are happy and safe in school.

### **Inspection findings**

- In order to check whether the school remains good, I followed a number of lines of enquiry. I considered the quality of provision for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. I wanted to find out whether the additional government funding for these pupils is well spent so that pupils make the best possible progress. You and your leaders recognise that in 2016 and 2017, disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities did not achieve as well as they should in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- The achievement of these pupils is a priority in your improvement plans. Governors ensure that funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is used effectively. They review the success of your chosen teaching approaches regularly at governing body meetings and challenge you and your leaders if pupils are not making rapid enough progress.
- You and your staff know the barriers to learning for these pupils very well. Pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning are identified quickly and given additional support. Work in pupils' books and your current assessment information show that disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are now making better progress. However, you have rightly identified that a greater number of disadvantaged pupils need to reach the national standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Another line of enquiry focused on how leaders monitor the quality of teaching across all subjects to ensure that pupils achieve well. This is because in the previous inspection report you and the governors were asked to make sure that subject leaders check teaching and learning in their areas effectively. I wanted to investigate whether the actions of your subject leaders enable pupils to make consistently good progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Your subject leaders are confident and knowledgeable. They check the quality of teaching in their subjects rigorously and in many different ways. This includes observing lessons, scrutinising teachers' plans, talking to pupils and looking at pupils' work books.

- The systems for assessing and recording the progress of pupils in all subjects, such as science, computing and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, are firmly in place. Consequently, your subject leaders are able to identify clearly where pupils' progress is best and where it could be better. Governors hold subject leaders to account by meeting regularly with them to discuss pupils' outcomes, strengths in the teaching of their subject and areas to improve.
- Finally, I explored how well pupils are supported and encouraged to attend school. This line of enquiry arose from historical information showing that not all pupils attended school as often as they should. I looked at rates of attendance and, specifically, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Previously, these groups have had particularly high rates of absence, including persistent absence.
- Leaders are aware of the need to improve attendance, and rigorous procedures are in place to establish the reasons for any pupil's absence. You and your leaders are quick to address attendance issues, for example through staff phoning parents at the start of the day when pupils do not turn up for school.
- Your focused actions are having a positive impact and the attendance figures for the school, and particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are all improving. Still, there are a number of disadvantaged pupils who, for various and sometimes complex reasons, are regularly absent. You know that there is still work to do to further improve the attendance of these pupils.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- increase the proportion of disadvantaged pupils that reach the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 and key stage 2
- continue to reduce the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent from school.

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

Fiona Webb  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

- You, your deputy headteacher and I discussed the lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's internal evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' progress and attainment.
- Meetings were held with you, your deputy headteacher, your inclusion manager, some of your subject leaders and a group of your governors, including the chair of governors. I also spoke with the school's local authority improvement adviser on the telephone to discuss their work with the school.
- I gathered a range of evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included joint observations with you and your deputy headteacher of teaching and learning in classes across the school.
- We looked at a sample of pupils' current work across all subjects and across a wide range of abilities.
- I spoke informally to a number of pupils in classrooms about their learning and met more formally with a group of pupils to talk about their school experience.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were examined, including mandatory checks made during the recruitment of new staff and case studies about referrals made to external agencies. A discussion was held with you, your deputy headteacher and your inclusion manager, as the school's designated safeguarding leads.
- The views of 209 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, as well as the 22 responses parents made using the free-text service.
- I looked at the 28 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the 74 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.