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22 March 2018

Mrs Janis Waters
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Dear Mrs Waters

Short inspection of Great Leighs Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 7 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 January 2014.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have ensured that the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection have been addressed.

Great Leighs School provides a welcoming, caring and inclusive environment where each child is treated as an individual. The school vision of 'Grow, Learn, Persevere and Succeed' is at the heart of its work. Its values are reflected and celebrated across all aspects of school life. For example, on the day of the inspection, children in the Reception class showed great courage in performing their assembly to the whole school and their parents. This also showcased the excellence they had achieved in their learning.

Pupils' behaviour was judged to be outstanding at the time of the previous inspection and this remains the case. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school during my inspection was exemplary. Pupils are enthusiastic about the school 'Family' system, which enables them to gain rewards for their house for positive behaviour around the school. All pupils show a high degree of respect towards each other and adults. During the inspection, they engaged politely and confidently with me and were keen to share their enjoyment of learning. Pupils take pride in their many responsibilities. For example, Year 5 pupils act as 'Reception buddies' reading to the younger children. Year 6 pupils are elected as family house captains and vice captains. Pupils value the fact that they are listened to and have the opportunity to contribute to school improvement. Their views are compiled into a 'Children's Self

Evaluation’.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly effusive about the school and all that it provides for their children. One parent, who summed up the views of many, stated: ‘Great Leighs is an amazing school. The school has a friendly, nurturing atmosphere which allows children to flourish physically, socially and emotionally as well as grow intellectually. I feel the school works well with parents, keeping us informed on pupil progress. All members of the teaching staff as well as the headteacher are approachable, always having their door open to listen.’

The curriculum is broad and balanced. Exciting topics capture pupils’ interests and enable effective learning. For example, pupils in Year 5 were learning about all aspects of space. This had inspired their writing and work in science, art and history. The space theme had also inspired younger pupils in Year 1. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching for music and art. A wide range of extra-curricular activities take place before school, at lunchtime and after school. Providing opportunities for pupils to take part in sport is given a high priority and the school enjoys many competitive successes. Younger pupils also benefit from ‘Forest School’ learning in the local woods.

You provide positive and effective leadership. Staff are proud to work at Great Leighs. They share your ambition to further raise standards and improve progress for all pupils. Together with governors and leaders, you have reviewed and improved school systems and accurately identified aspects of teaching and learning which need to be better. Your improvement plans include appropriate actions to address these. Your partnership work with other schools is making an effective contribution to school improvement. Governors are well informed and have a good understanding of the school’s strengths and weaknesses. Their termly monitoring days are clearly focused on the school’s improvement priorities. Consequently, they are able to hold leaders to account effectively for pupils’ achievement.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. Leaders, including governors, ensure that all aspects of safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that staff training is fully up to date. Weekly briefings ensure that staff are always aware of any new information related to safeguarding. Consequently, everyone understands their responsibilities fully and all staff are quick to report any concerns they may have to the school’s designated safeguarding leaders. These are always rigorously followed up.

Pupils, parents and staff all agree that the school is a safe place. Pupils say they feel happy and safe at school. They told me that they learn how to keep safe, for example when using the internet. They could recall assemblies about e-safety and told me how their ‘digital leaders’ help them when they are using computers.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry I explored in order to ascertain that the school remained good was around how well pupils are progressing from their starting points. This was because in 2017, the progress of a few pupils from the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6 was poor. This included some who were disadvantaged or who had special educational needs and/or disabilities. We discussed some individual pupils and you also provided case study information about the support they had received. We also looked at school internal tracking information about current pupils' progress and the evidence from their book work.
- Some of the pupils who were recorded as having poor progress had low starting points, combined with very high needs. Despite a range of effective support and intervention provided by the school, these pupils did not make good academic progress. However, you provided evidence to show how these pupils had developed socially and improved their self-esteem in order to help them be better placed to meet the demands of secondary education.
- You have reviewed and improved how the school checks on the progress of pupils across the school. All teachers are now more aware of pupils' starting points and the expectations of the progress they should be making. Your current information shows that almost all pupils are making at least expected progress and that a high proportion are making better than expected progress. The work we saw in pupils' books supports that this is the case.
- My second line of enquiry was to determine whether the school has capacity for sustained further improvement. In 2016, outcomes at the end of key stage 2 were below average for reading, writing and mathematics combined. This was mainly because outcomes in writing were below average. In 2017, outcomes rose to above average for reading, writing and mathematics combined. Outcomes in writing were in line with the national average for the expected level and above for greater depth.
- The improvement seen in writing reflects the actions that you have taken to improve this subject. This has been a focus for the partnership cluster and your English subject leader has worked closely with other schools. Improving boys' writing and also improving handwriting and spelling across the school were particular areas of focus. Boys' interests have been considered when choosing genres and topics, and the impact of this in inspiring them is evident in their writing. There has been a new weekly approach to teaching spellings, with daily practice. This is leading to improvement. We agreed that there is still room for further improvement and that your development plans include appropriate actions to bring this about.
- During the inspection, I met with four subject leaders, including those for mathematics and English. All exuded a passion and enthusiasm for driving their subjects and bringing about further improvement. They spoke competently about the actions they were taking and detailed the positive impact that these were having. You and leaders across the school are demonstrating that there is good capacity for sustained further improvement.
- The final line of enquiry I pursued was to check how well the school has addressed the recommendations from the previous inspection report. This had

identified two main areas: provision for more able pupils in mathematics and children's learning in the Reception class. Following the previous inspection, the school initially focused on improving teaching in mathematics to ensure that more pupils reached age-related expectations and to provide more opportunities for all pupils, including the most able, to develop their reasoning skills.

- In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils meeting and exceeding age-related expectations in mathematics was just above average. In 2017, mathematics outcomes improved further. The measure of pupils' progress in mathematics also improved. School tracking information indicates that in 2018, these outcomes are likely to improve again, with even higher proportions of pupils exceeding age-related expectations. The work in pupils' books also indicates that this is likely to be the case. This supports the fact that this area for improvement has been effectively addressed.
- The previous inspection report had highlighted the need to improve outside provision for the Reception class, as well as improving outcomes. Since that report was published, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected good level of development at the end of the Reception Year has consistently been above average.
- We observed learning in the current Reception class and also looked at the work that children have been doing. Both the inside and outside learning environments provide well for all areas of learning. We saw purposeful learning and children enthused by engaging activities around the current 'Pirate' theme. In the role play area, children enjoyed writing messages to put in bottles. I saw that children's reading and number skills are developing well and that they are responding to the range of opportunities they are given to write. School tracking information for children in the Reception class indicates that the above average outcomes seen in previous years are likely to be maintained and children's work also supports this. This area for improvement has been successfully addressed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- plans to further improve attainment and progress in writing, by focusing more on accurate spelling, are fully implemented.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Beale

Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

You and I discussed the key lines of enquiry for this inspection, the school's self-evaluation of its performance, plans for future improvement and information about current pupils' progress and attainment. Meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher, four subject leaders and the chair of governors. Additionally, I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. We visited all classrooms together to observe teaching, learning and assessment, and looked at the work in pupils' books in a range of subjects.

I met with a group of pupils to talk about their experiences at school and also talked more informally with pupils in lessons and at breaktime. I scrutinised safeguarding policies and practice, including systems for safe recruitment of staff.

The views of 116 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account as well as 64 responses using the free-text service. I also considered the views of the parents I spoke with during the inspection. Additionally, I looked at the 29 responses to the staff questionnaire.