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3 April 2018

Mrs Karen Bos  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Bos

### **Short inspection of Darell Primary and Nursery School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 March 2018 with Kanwaljit Singh, Ofsted Inspector, 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 December 2012.

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

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have addressed the key issues raised. For example, pupils know how to improve their work, and teachers adapt and reshape tasks during lessons so that all pupils make consistently swift progress.

On your arrival as headteacher at the school in February 2016, you faced a range of challenges. You have not hesitated to take robust action and have made a series of positive changes to the way that the school is led. For example, you have brought in new teachers to strengthen the staff team. You have restructured the leadership team. You have implemented new measures to ensure that the school has developed as an inclusive and nurturing environment. You have also made improvements to the quality of teaching and the curriculum of the school. The strong results in the 2017 national tests in key stage 2 and the assessments in key stage 1 show that the changes you have made are having a positive impact.

Pupils said that they enjoy being part of the Darell community. They are thoughtful and attentive and told us that they like attending school because learning is fun. You ensure that pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and that they are polite and friendly. They understand and can explain the school core values of 'Enjoy, Aspire, Achieve'. Staff ensure that pupils who join the school during the year are welcomed and settle in well. Pupils enjoy getting certificates for their achievements and enthuse about the many outings and visits that the school organises. The variety of extra-curricular clubs that pupils can choose, such as choir, animation studio, basketball and football, promote their interests and are very

popular. You have made sure that pupils learn a broad and balanced range of subjects.

Since the last inspection, the school and surrounding community have changed in character. More pupils now enter the school with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. Several join the school speaking no English. You, together with teachers, manage this well by ensuring that all pupils are given opportunities to catch up if needed. Our observations of pupils' work in lessons and in their workbooks confirm the school's own progress information that new pupils are making good progress.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that records are detailed and of high quality. Staff manage pupils' well-being meticulously. Leaders work with outside agencies and liaise with them quickly in order to secure strong support for children and their families. Leaders manage concerns sensitively and effectively. There is a culture of vigilance where children's welfare is actively promoted. Children are listened to and feel safe.

All staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of current safeguarding guidance and procedures. Pre-employment checks on adults working at the school meet statutory requirements. Staff training is up to date, and their safeguarding practice is effective. Governors carry out appropriate checks on safeguarding during the school year.

### **Inspection findings**

- The first line of enquiry examined the impact of measures to improve attendance and reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions. This was chosen because rates of attendance at the school have been below the national average of 96% in recent years. In 2017, the school attendance rate was 94.9%, and the number of exclusions at the school is above the national average rate.
- You have introduced systems to improve rates of attendance, which include phone calls and letters to families when pupils are absent or late. You have also involved the local education welfare officer in some cases. They have invited parents and carers to workshops or 1:1 meetings to encourage better attendance. You have robustly challenged parents who take their families on unauthorised holidays during the term time. You have also undertaken home visits to check on the whereabouts of pupils. This range of measures has driven down absence. As a result, at the time of this inspection, attendance is up to 95.7% and showing a rising trend. The measures you have introduced have clearly had a positive impact. Nevertheless, you accept that there is still more to be done in terms of raising parental awareness about the need to have their children attend school consistently.
- The school houses a unit for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN). In the past, some pupils in the mainstream exhibited challenging behaviours and were sanctioned with short-term exclusions. Most of these pupils have left the

school and are now in specialist provision. You have implemented a robust behaviour policy and work closely with parents to intervene early before any exclusion might be necessary. As a result, there have been no exclusions during this academic year.

- The second line of enquiry examined measures to raise attainment in the early years foundation stage (EYFS). This was chosen because the standards reached in EYFS in 2015 were above the national average, whereas in 2017 the standards declined and were below.
- The slight fall in standards is, in part, due to the changing nature of the intake of the school in the early years. Now, for example, more children start school speaking little or no English, and there is more movement of pupils during each academic year. However, you are aware of this and have taken steps to address the issue of standards. For example, assessments are used more quickly and accurately to identify needs and put in place extra teaching. The teaching of phonics was observed in the early years and remains a strength. Similarly, provision in the Nursery is effective. However, the environment offered in the Reception classes is not as rich and stimulating as it might be and lacks structure. This limits children's ability to sustain interest in their learning and their understanding of the world around them. Scrutiny of learning journals reveals that many children do indeed start school with lower than expected levels of knowledge and skills, but that they catch up quickly. Overall, you accept that more work needs to be done in the EYFS to ensure that the children reach the highest possible standards.
- The final line of enquiry focused on measures to raise the overall attainment of disadvantaged pupils. This was chosen because assessment information showed that the proportion of pupils reaching expected and above-expected standards was below the national average in a range of subjects. There are a relatively high number of pupils in the school in this group. You told me that you know that rates of progress for all pupils in key stage 2 are high. However, you are also aware that disadvantaged pupils sometimes do not reach the levels that they are capable of. To address this, you have introduced a range of measures designed to target this group so that they reach the highest possible standards. The inspectors visited classrooms together with you and your other senior leaders.
- You have set in place learning mentoring and focused support for pupils in the disadvantaged group. Through accurate use of assessments, pupils receive extra teaching and learning opportunities with additional adults in small groups in and out of class. Provision for this group is now carefully organised and addresses needs effectively. You have set appropriately high targets for all pupils and work to ensure that these targets are met through supporting teachers and improving their practice. In class, inspectors saw that all pupils engage well, persist with their learning and enjoy their successes. Scrutiny of workbooks from across the school revealed that all pupils, including the disadvantaged most able, make strong gains from their starting points. In hearing pupils read, inspectors noted the fluency and accurate use of phonics of all readers. The initiatives you have set in place are showing clear positive impact, and you recognise that this area will remain a priority so that these improvements are sustained.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in the EYFS, further steps are taken to improve the curriculum and the teaching and learning environment
- the effective steps taken to raise the overall attainment of disadvantaged pupils are sustained, so that all pupils consistently demonstrate substantial and sustained progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Roberts  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

The inspectors carried out the following activities during the inspection:

- Meetings were held with you, two assistant headteachers and middle leaders.
- Discussions were held with six governors, including the chair of governors, and a group of pupils; the inspector also had a discussion with a local authority education adviser.
- Teaching and learning were observed in a range of lessons.
- Pupils' progress was also evaluated by looking at pupils' workbooks, 'learning journals' and displays.
- Several pupils read to the inspectors.
- Recent information about pupils' progress was evaluated.
- The views of staff were considered through 40 responses to the staff survey.
- Parents' views were considered through 122 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and discussions with parents in the playground before school.