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Mrs Stephanie Ireland
Headteacher
South Green Infant School
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Dear Mrs Ireland

Short inspection of South Green Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 May 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your school is welcoming and inclusive and your pupils value their learning and achievements. Your curriculum is well planned. Pupils experience many engaging activities that stimulate learning and deepen their understanding of the world around them. You and your staff use the school's outdoor spaces well. Pupils have good opportunities for imaginative learning in a language-rich environment. Your pupils are polite, well behaved and enthusiastic. They listen carefully in lessons and try hard to do their best. Pupils talk positively about their time in school and the activities they enjoy most. They are kind, caring and happy.

Parents and carers are full of praise for your school's work. They value the abilities and approachability of staff and the care shown to their children. Parents feel included in the life of the school and enjoy being invited to activities such as birthday assemblies. The vast majority of parents would recommend your school to others.

Children have a good start to school life in your Nursery and Reception classes. The staff in early years are knowledgeable and work hard as a team to ensure the very best outcomes for the children in their care. They know the children very well and their assessments of learning are accurate. The early years environment is carefully planned with learning in mind and, consequently, your children make good progress.

Your governing body is well informed and effective. Governors are fully involved in the life of the school; they meet staff regularly and question performance with rigour. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and carefully check on issues such as finance and personnel. They make positive recommendations, such as the introduction of an additional mathematics club, that have resulted in greater opportunity and better learning for pupils.

The school's overall attendance has been improving consistently and is now above average. Your staff have worked hard to reduce the rate of persistent absence among pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. However, the rate of persistent absence among your disadvantaged pupils remains high and work needs to be done to reduce this.

Your school has made good progress since your previous inspection. Improved phonics teaching has resulted in the percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard by the end of Year 1 being consistently higher than average. Pupils make excellent progress in reading and their mathematics work is steadily improving. I saw evidence of good-quality work throughout the school. However, because of inconsistencies in expectation and poor attendance for some, not all pupils make the progress they are capable of.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your team have made sure that all staff understand their responsibilities regarding safeguarding. They are vigilant and proactive. You work well with other agencies, such as the Family Well-being Service, to ensure that your children are safe. You have developed strong working relationships with those parents who need additional help and support.

Governors make careful checks on safeguarding procedures. The school's record-keeping is careful and detailed. Recruitment process are secure and all statutory requirements are met.

Your pupils feel safe in school. The premises are maintained as a secure environment and pupils are appropriately supervised at all times. They play happily, and the outdoor dance session at lunchtime was joyful. Some pupils say that they have been occasionally worried by rough play outside. You and your staff are aware of this and are taking effective measures. Instances of poor behaviour are rare. Lessons and school assemblies are used well to teach pupils about your values and expectations.

Inspection findings

- I explored a number of lines of enquiry during this inspection. The first was to do with the teaching of writing and how you were bringing about improvements. Published school data indicates that your pupils do consistently well in reading but less so in writing.

- The teaching of writing in the early years is a strength. Teachers have planned their classrooms and outdoor spaces to ensure that children have many opportunities and contexts in which to write. For example, children wrote their own stories following a recent visit from an author. The most able children wrote using accurate letter formation and using their phonics knowledge to make good attempts at correct spelling.
- In Years 1 and 2, pupils have experience of writing for a range of purposes, including telling stories, writing reports and giving information. Pupils in Year 2 had recently written about a class trip to the zoo. In this work there were good examples of pupils using adjectives, punctuating properly and being ambitious with vocabulary. However, handwriting and presentation skills are not consistent between the classes and progress for the most able varies.
- My second line of enquiry was to review the provision for disadvantaged pupils. Although the number of disadvantaged pupils in the school varies from year to year and is proportionately low, it is nevertheless important to be sure that this group is making good progress. The school knows this group of pupils well and the staff have a shared understanding of their individual needs and any difficulties they face when learning. However, the attendance rate for the school's disadvantaged pupils is weaker than for other pupils. There are too many in this group whose attendance remains below average.
- You are using additional funding well to provide targeted intervention and support for those pupils who need a boost to enable them to catch up on their learning. You have also given careful consideration to pupils' emotional and social needs and have allocated funding for nurture activities and family support work. This has resulted in increased self-confidence and many pupils within this group are making good progress.
- I also looked at the school's provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This was because published assessment information indicated that these pupils make less progress than their classmates. I wanted to test whether this was actually the case. Your school makes good provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is knowledgeable and diligent; she has been responsible for securing considerable additional funding and manages the team of support assistants well. Staff are well trained and provide good learning support that enables pupils to make good progress. Your transition arrangements from the early years through to the junior school are a strength.
- Finally, I wanted to check on the development of curriculum leaders, which was an area for improvement from your previous inspection. I wanted to be sure that developments were secure and lasting. The school's subject leaders have benefited from considerable training and this element of leadership is making significant improvements within the school. Subject leaders have been responsible for promoting their curriculum areas, which has resulted in exciting and innovative learning for pupils. For example, the recent South Green history week was enjoyed throughout the school. Pupils developed a knowledge and understanding of their community with good-quality learning across the whole curriculum.

- In subjects such as science and mathematics, subject leaders systematically monitor progress, inform senior leaders on areas for improvement and develop action plans. They give feedback to colleagues and provide coaching or specialist training as necessary. Leaders acknowledge that there are some inconsistencies within the school and work together to address this. Governors carefully check curriculum progress. They schedule subject leader presentations in their meetings and challenge and support in equal measure. These activities ensure the consistency and sustainability of good-quality subject leadership.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they bring greater consistency to the teaching of writing so that pupils make progress equally throughout their experience in key stage 1
- they continue to use all means at their disposal to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and reduce their rate of persistent absence so that overall attendance is at least average.

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

James Richards
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

My inspection activities included meetings with curriculum subject leaders, the SENCo, members of staff with responsibility for safeguarding and the chair of the governing body. I carried out learning walks with senior leaders in all areas of the school, briefly visiting most classes. I looked in depth at pupils' writing books and listened to readers from Years 1 and 2.

During the inspection I was able to refer to a range of the school's documents. These included self-evaluation and documentation relating to assessment, SEN, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. I considered the 74 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 25 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire and three responses to the pupils' questionnaire.