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18 April 2018

Miss Emily Dawkins  
Headteacher  
Garland Junior School  
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Dear Miss Dawkins

### **Short inspection of Garland Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 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. You provide inspirational leadership that motivates staff and pupils alike. Together with your deputy, you lead the school with determination, gaining the trust and respect of the whole school community. One parent commented: 'I would recommend this school to any parent looking for a junior school with strong leadership, excellent teaching and a safe environment.'

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to staffing. You managed these changes well, ensuring that the focus on improving teaching and learning did not waver. Recent appointments to middle leadership have strengthened the school's capacity for further improvement. Leaders have a clear and accurate view of what the school does well and what could be even better. You have created a caring and inclusive school, where every pupil is listened to.

Pupils told me they enjoy coming to Garland Junior School because their teachers are kind and supportive. They understand and follow the behaviour policy well. During my visit, classrooms were calm and focused on learning. Pupils who need help with their behaviour choices, and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported well. Many parents stated how happy their children are at the school and how well the staff know their children. As one parent wrote: 'The school is of huge importance to the community. It is inclusive, well led and offers the children a breadth of experiences.' I visited the school on a parents' open morning, when parents had the opportunity to visit their child's class to join in

with a lesson. Parents I spoke to appreciated this chance. As one parent commented: 'Parents are encouraged to become involved in their child's learning experience'.

The previous inspection report highlighted the school's many strengths, including good progress, approachable staff and enjoyable lessons. You have maintained these strengths. At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve teaching in the school. In particular, they asked for teachers to check on pupils' progress during lessons and to intervene to add greater challenge. You successfully place great importance on continually improving the quality of teaching in the school. However, the expectations of what the most able pupils can attain could be higher.

The previous inspection report also asked leaders to improve the attainment of the most able pupils in writing. In 2017, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who attained greater depth in writing was in line with the national average. However, leaders know that improving the writing skills of pupils currently in the school remains a suitable focus. Leaders have also identified there is still work to be done to ensure that the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are stronger.

The governing body carries out its statutory duties effectively. Governors are knowledgeable about the school and support you well. They take every opportunity to check what they are being told. They ask leaders pertinent and challenging questions. For example, they have a thorough understanding of the spending decisions relating to the pupil premium strategy, and monitor its impact carefully. Governors are ambitious for the school and every pupil who attends it.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The school's leaders and governors fulfil their statutory safeguarding duties well. You and your governors have established a strong culture of safeguarding in which there is no complacency. Policies and procedures are fit for purpose, and the day-to-day routines are secure. Any necessary actions are completed without delay and are followed up in an efficient manner. Pre-employment checks demonstrate leaders' thorough action in ensuring the suitability of all staff and volunteers to work in the school.

Safeguarding training is regular. You have built very positive working relationships with external agencies so that you can access the right support for vulnerable pupils in a timely way. The governor responsible for safeguarding checks that the school's single central record is maintained accurately. Governors also check that safeguarding policies and procedures work effectively during their regular visits to the school.

Most pupils attend the school regularly. The attendance of pupils from the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community is improving as school leaders work persistently with their families to reinforce the need for good attendance. However, attendance figures for disadvantaged pupils remain below those of their classmates. Leaders acknowledge there is still work to do to ensure that disadvantaged pupils attend

school regularly.

In the past, the proportion of pupils who have received a fixed-term exclusion has been above that typically seen in primary schools. The rate of exclusion has dropped considerably over the past two years. Exclusion now occurs very rarely and is used only as a last resort.

Pupils say that staff sort out any problems quickly and effectively by talking and listening to them. They especially appreciate the 'worry bins' in each classroom, where they can share concerns with their teacher. They told me that when bullying happens: 'Teachers sort it out there and then. They don't wait until lunchtime.' Pupils have a strong knowledge of how to keep themselves safe online.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the beginning of the inspection, we agreed that the focus for my investigations would be on the progress boys make in writing; how well leaders work to improve teaching; and the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- The progress pupils made in writing by the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was in line with the national average. However, the progress that boys have made in writing over the past two years, by the end of key stage 2, has been below that seen nationally. In order to improve progress for boys in writing, leaders have carefully planned a new curriculum driven by focusing on English.
- You have reviewed the teaching of grammar to ensure that pupils make connections between what they have read and what they write. Pupils have many opportunities to write across the curriculum. Leaders have carefully considered topics and texts that will interest both genders. During my visits to lessons across the school, I saw both boys and girls actively engaged and enjoying their English learning.
- Current assessment information shows that the progress of boys and girls in writing across the school is now similar. However, during the scrutiny of pupils' work in writing, leaders acknowledged that there is still work to do to ensure that pupils' punctuation, handwriting and spelling skills are consistently high across the school.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching in the school. They check this regularly by visiting lessons, talking to pupils, and looking at their books. You are developing the skills of staff effectively by mentoring and coaching. You encourage your teachers to reflect on their own practice and try out new ideas. As one member of staff wrote, 'Change is necessary and we constantly evolve, try new initiatives and improve.'
- Middle leaders, although new in their roles, support and challenge teachers well through precise feedback and knowledgeable advice. Recent improvements to the teaching of mathematics have ensured that pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills are more secure. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate. Leaders know that teaching does not always challenge the most able pupils. This was evident both in my visits to lessons as well as in pupils' books. Increasing the proportion of pupils working at the higher standards is a suitable focus for the

school.

- Leaders have established a clear strategy to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Vulnerable pupils are provided with a range of additional support to accelerate their progress. Staff know the pupils well, and this support is tailored to their individual needs. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is currently improving. However, there are still further developments to be made to ensure that the progress of this group of pupils is consistently rapid in all year groups.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- punctuation, spelling and handwriting skills are taught to a consistently high standard across the school
- teachers challenge the most able pupils fully so that more pupils are working at the higher standards across the school
- they continue to improve outcomes for, and the attendance of, disadvantaged pupils, so that more of these pupils meet the expected standards for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Lea Hannam  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, I met with you and your deputy to discuss the school's effectiveness. We visited lessons to observe pupils' learning, speak to pupils and look at their work. Together, with your English and mathematics leaders, we looked at the quality of pupils' work in books. I considered 128 responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and their free-text comments. Responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires were also considered. I spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day, and to a representative from the local authority on the telephone. I met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met the inclusion leader and spoke to a group of pupils about their school. I evaluated the school's safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of documents was examined, including: the school's self-evaluation and school improvement planning; pupils' progress information; attendance information; and policies.