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Mr Hoosen Randeree
Headteacher
The Orchard School
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Dear Mr Randeree

Short inspection of The Orchard School

Following my visit to the school on 17 April 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. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You joined the school shortly after its previous inspection. You created a new leadership team, including the appointment of two assistant headteachers. Together, you have worked tirelessly to tackle the areas for improvement that were identified at the time of that inspection. Your incisive understanding of the school's effectiveness underpins leaders' work to build on its existing strengths. Your actions focus sharply on raising standards and ensuring that all pupils benefit from consistently strong teaching. You and your team's work have brought about impressive improvements in pupils' outcomes across the school, both academically and in terms of their personal development. For example, for the last two years, pupils' progress in reading and mathematics during key stage 2 has been in the top 5% of all schools nationally. This is also the case for disadvantaged pupils. Outcomes in key stage 1 are equally strong. For example, pupils' attainment in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been above the national average for the last three years. You and your team are not complacent. You acknowledge that the most able pupils in key stage 1 would benefit from targeted challenge to ensure that they attain the higher standards. Your work to address this is proving effective.

At the heart of the school's success is the way in which you have created a strong

common purpose across the staff team. Staff share your high aspirations and are united in their drive to ensure that pupils receive the highest standard of education. You and your assistant headteacher lead by example in the way you model your high aspirations. This has resulted in a strong team spirit where everyone understands their part in the school's continuous journey of improvement. Leaders have not shied away from the challenges that have come with developing the culture of the school to achieve their vision.

You and the governing body demonstrate a genuine commitment to ensuring that the school is outward facing. You have made sure that the school is an integral part of the local community, working in close partnership with other local schools and providers. You have not overlooked the importance of involving parents and carers closely in their children's education. Through your well-planned programme of workshops and community events, parents access the information they need to support their children's learning. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and its leadership.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective. There are clear systems and processes for reporting concerns and escalating these appropriately. Leaders ensure that staff understand and follow school procedures consistently, and this contributes well to the culture of vigilance. Governors have a good oversight and knowledge of the school's arrangements, and monitor these regularly. For example, they check that pre-employment checks have been carried out in accordance with statutory requirements, and the records of these checks are well maintained.

Staff are provided with comprehensive and regular training on a range of safeguarding issues, including the risks of female genital mutilation and radicalisation. Leaders give careful consideration to the training that staff need to ensure that they can identify and respond effectively to particular risks in the local community.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. The school's curriculum supports this very well. For example, children in early years learn about what constitutes appropriate physical contact and personal space. The school places a high value on pupils' personal development. Pupils learn how to be appropriately assertive, and this affects how they are able to keep themselves safe, for example by 'knowing how to say no'. Year 6 pupils are suitably prepared for the transition to secondary school, with workshops on safe travel and homophobic bullying. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. The school works closely with parents to make them aware of safeguarding risks, and parents are confident that their children are safe in school.

Inspection findings

- I considered three key lines of enquiry to test out the quality of education the school provides. Firstly, I considered pupils' progress in writing during key stage 2. Over time, this has typically been strong. For example, in 2016, Year 6 pupils' progress was significantly above the national average. Although the progress of the

2017 Year 6 cohort was still strong, leaders were disappointed that it dipped slightly in comparison with the 2016 cohort. Therefore, you and your team have made writing a key focus in your plans for improvement.

- Visits to lessons and work in pupils' books show that pupils typically make excellent gains in their writing skills. A particular strength is the way in which pupils benefit from opportunities to practise and deepen their writing skills across other subjects. Furthermore, pupils are provided with an excellent range of enrichment opportunities, which motivate them to write. For example, during the inspection, the school took delivery of a set of lunar rocks from NASA. Pupils were studying these rocks and using this as a basis for their writing in science.
- Another successful aspect of the teaching of writing is the way in which adults promote pupils' talk and language. Teachers routinely expect pupils to apply these language skills when they are writing, resulting in rich and high-quality pieces of work. The most able pupils in key stage 2 are challenged well, as their sophisticated grammar and vocabulary choices show.
- Pupils can confidently talk about their learning and explain what they need to do to improve their work. They explained that teachers provide them with clear examples, so they know how to be successful. Similarly, they appreciate how teachers' advice encourages them to challenge themselves and make improvements. Pupils at the early stages of speaking English benefit from well-targeted support. This ensures that they quickly develop a secure command of grammar and punctuation, and are able to make increasingly accurate vocabulary choices.
- You and your staff have a very accurate picture of pupils' outcomes in writing. You use this information to good effect to improve teaching, so it is closely matched to pupils' needs. Wisely, you have focused on ensuring that excellent practice in upper key stage 2 is disseminated through all year groups. This is helping to raise standards further, and progress in all classes is consistently strong. School assessment information, as well as work in pupils' books, show that a very high proportion of pupils are working at the standard expected for their age, including in Year 6.
- In 2017, the overall attainment of Year 2 pupils was high when compared with the national average. However, in comparison with other schools nationally, few pupils achieved the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Additionally, disadvantaged pupils' attainment was not as strong as that of their peers. Therefore, my second line of enquiry considered how well teaching challenges all groups of pupils in early years and key stage 1. Your evaluation of the school's work has identified this as a priority for improvement.
- The majority of children in early years join the school with knowledge and understanding that are below those typical for their age. Over half join the Reception class with no previous experience in an early years setting, and at the early stages of speaking English. Children are motivated to learn and, through well-established routines, grow in confidence and independence.
- Effective teaching ensures that children make up ground quickly. Staff have high expectations of what children can achieve. Adults are skilled in developing and

extending children's communication and language skills. For example, during a group activity, an adult challenged children to identify and name shapes, and sort them according to their properties.

- Alongside your team's close attention to children's language development, children benefit from a secure foundation in their phonics knowledge. Adults plan exciting activities that encourage children to apply their knowledge in their early writing. For example, children enthusiastically wrote letters to a local zoo asking for an animal to look after.
- You and your team ensure that disadvantaged children get off to a strong start in school. Visits to classrooms and children's 'learning journals' demonstrate that these children learn as well as their peers. This is because adults have an accurate understanding of children's needs and interests, and match tasks to these very well.
- In key stage 1, teachers build effectively on pupils' gains in early years. Where attainment on entry to Year 1 has been lower for some cohorts, teachers plan accordingly and ensure that pupils' learning is developed step by step to ensure that it is secure. The emphasis on language development and talk in key stage 1 is supporting pupils' writing very well. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils. These pupils articulate their learning with a sense of pride and confidence.
- Work in pupils' books demonstrates that teaching is increasingly stretching the thinking and knowledge of the most able pupils. Leaders are confident that a higher proportion of pupils will attain the highest standard by the end of key stage 1. Nevertheless, you and your team recognise that further work is needed to embed these improvements, particularly in writing. On occasions, teachers select tasks and resources that limit the way the most able pupils can apply and extend their writing skills.
- At the start of the inspection, you and your team explained that you evaluated pupils' outcomes as outstanding. By the end of key stage 2, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is high. They are therefore very well prepared for the academic demands of the secondary school curriculum.
- My final line of enquiry focused on how the school's curriculum contributes to other aspects of pupils' learning and development.
- You and your staff are passionate about the development of the 'whole child'. This has become an integral part of the school's ethos. The school's curriculum has been enriched with a broad range of experiences, including trips, visitors to school and local partnerships. These successfully deepen pupils' learning and instil them with a thirst for knowledge. For example, pupils visited the Royal Opera House and art galleries in London. These visits led to impressive examples of pupils' artwork and writing.
- The quality of pupils' learning is strong across a range of subjects. Crucially, pupils' excellent attainment in English and mathematics has not been achieved at the expense of a broad range of subjects and stimulating experiences.
- Leaders and staff know your pupils exceptionally well. Together, you strive to expand pupils' experiences to prepare them for life in modern Britain. Leaders actively seek out ways to broaden pupils' experience. Becoming a more outward-facing school and broadening provision are the drivers that have underpinned the

current leadership's approach to school improvement.

- The school provides Islamic studies through a religious education programme used across the trust. This programme supports pupils to explore a range of faiths, and allows them to develop their own faith, with a clear understanding of, and respect for the beliefs of others.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- in key stage 1, the most able pupils are routinely challenged to achieve the highest standards in their writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Flesher
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I held meetings with leaders, including governors, to discuss their evaluation of the school's effectiveness and improvement plans. I also held a meeting with a representative from the local authority. I considered documentation provided by the school and information on the school's website. Classrooms in every year group were visited with senior leaders. Pupils' books were also reviewed. I heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read, and talked to them about their learning and wider experiences in school, including in relation to safeguarding. I spoke to pupils about their learning during my visits to classrooms and in the playground. I took into account 17 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, 65 responses to the pupil survey and 22 responses to the staff survey.