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Miss Louise Tunstall
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Tunstall

Short inspection of Abbey Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 June 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 June 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the school's performance and use this to plan carefully for the next stage of its development. You work well together towards a shared vision for the school and continually strive to improve.

Leaders have maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection and addressed areas identified for improvement. Consequently, teaching assistants now provide effective support to the pupils whom they work with. This results in these pupils making good progress across a range of subjects. Furthermore, your actions to improve pupils' progress in writing have been successful. Pupils write widely and for a range of purposes. They regularly apply their grammar skills when writing across the curriculum. Evidence in pupils' books shows that most pupils make good progress in writing and are working at standards expected for their age. Furthermore, a higher proportion of pupils than previously are working at the 'greater depth' standard in writing.

Leaders continue to monitor carefully the quality of teaching and learning. This information is used to focus further training sharply on where it is needed. Strong support is provided to help all staff develop, whatever their roles. As a result of these improvements, Year 6 pupils' attainment in 2017 was above average in reading and broadly average in writing and mathematics.

Governors are involved in a range of activities to give them first-hand evidence of the school's work, including 'learning walks' and discussions with pupils. You provide them with comprehensive information about the progress pupils make and how the

school is meeting its improvement priorities. As a result, governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Your polite and welcoming pupils told me that adults are ready to help them if they have a worry or a concern. In lessons, pupils are keen to do their best and to achieve well. Around school, pupils are well behaved. Pupils told me that they feel safe and that you deal effectively with the rare incidents of bullying.

The parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and sent additional comments, are overwhelmingly positive about the school. The majority of parents would recommend the school to other families. Typical of parents' comments, one wrote, 'My child has flourished at this school and the staff make it their concern to know each child, making them feel valued within their school community.'

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that pupils are safe and provide strong pastoral care. You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The arrangements for checking that staff are suitable people to work with children meet requirements. Staff receive appropriate training, and regular updates ensure that they are well briefed about potential risks to the safety of pupils. As a result, they understand the actions they should take if they are concerned about a pupil's welfare. The curriculum supports pupils well in maintaining their own safety. They are especially knowledgeable about keeping safe online.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on four key lines of enquiry, the first of which related to the achievement of the most able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2. This was because, in 2017, the proportion of pupils at the end of Year 6 who attained the high standard in reading, writing and mathematics was below average. Leaders have also identified this as an area for improvement and were quick to take action this year.
- Leaders have taken concerted action to develop pupils' writing skills. Teachers now model writing well. They show greater consistency in teaching key aspects of writing, including the use of spelling, punctuation and grammar, redrafting, and building cohesion in paragraphs. Pupils are given lots of opportunities to write across the curriculum. Teachers' high expectations also lift the performance of the most able writers.
- The quality of writing observed in the books of current pupils shows that the most able writers are now making stronger progress. They write with increasing confidence and use sophisticated vocabulary to adapt their writing to the intended audience.
- You have also provided training for staff to strengthen their understanding of how pupils learn to read. As a result, teachers are now more confident and skilful in their planning of learning activities to develop the most able pupils' reading

skills. Pupils have a wide choice of complex texts and read more often because they enjoy reading. Inspection evidence confirms that your assessments are correct and that more pupils are currently working at the high standard in reading in key stage 2. However, as you agreed, the most able pupils are sometimes expected to complete the same reading comprehension activities as other pupils before moving on to more independent, challenging work. This means that some learning time is lost.

- In mathematics, leaders have adopted a whole-school approach to broadening and deepening pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. Consequently, the majority of pupils are making good progress in mathematics. However, the most able pupils spend too long practising number skills that they already know, and are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. This, too, slows their progress.
- Secondly, we focused on the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, in writing and mathematics in key stage 2. This was because they performed less well than their peers nationally at the end of Year 6 in 2017. Your improvement plan has identified this as a priority for action this year.
- There is now a sharper focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. School leaders have put additional support in place to help disadvantaged pupils overcome barriers to learning. Their progress is regularly and carefully reviewed, involving both teacher and pupil. This has made teachers more accountable for the progress of the disadvantaged pupils in their classes.
- The school has also taken a wider view of the development of each pupil. Therapists and mentoring are used to improve attitudes to learning where necessary. The school also funds places on school visits and residential trips. The result of these actions is that disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, have made good progress this year in both writing and mathematics.
- I also looked at how well boys learn in early years. Last year, fewer boys than girls achieved age-related expectations at the end of Reception. This year, you have taken decisive action to address this. The indoor and outdoor classroom areas are bright and engaging. Staff plan interesting activities which match boys' interests and develop their skills well. Plenty of speaking and listening opportunities support all children well, including boys.
- Across Nursery and Reception, children play with cooperation and enjoyment. Staff ask the right questions to develop children's thinking and enhance their learning. As a result, a significantly higher proportion of boys are now making good progress in the different areas of learning and more boys than previously are meeting the expected levels of development in the early learning goals.
- The fourth focus of this inspection related to pupils' attendance. All leaders have worked hard over a period of time to address issues of low attendance and the persistent absence of some pupils, which have been below average for some time. Leaders rigorously track absences, and respond on the same day if a child is absent from school. A wide range of rewards and incentives encourage pupils to attend. Analysis of attendance data from this year suggests that attendance

rates are now improving. Leaders acknowledge that there is still more work to be done in this area.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers provide activities in reading and mathematics that build on what the most able pupils can already do, providing consistent challenge
- they continue to raise pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism.

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

Yours sincerely

Jenell Chetty
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and the senior leadership team. I also spoke to the chair of governors. I met with nine pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 and spoke informally with other pupils during lessons and playtime. I visited classes with you, where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I also heard pupils from Year 3 and Year 6 read.

I carried out a more detailed scrutiny of some pupils' work with you and the deputy headteacher. I checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements. I looked at the survey results from staff and parents and considered the free-text comments that had been placed on Parent View. I considered the accuracy of your self-evaluation and looked at a range of other documentation, including information on pupils' achievement, the school development plan and external reports.