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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Linda Wilmann
Headteacher
Maypole Primary School
Franklin Road
Dartford
Kent
DA2 7UZ

Dear Mrs Wilmann

Short inspection of Maypole Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

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

Since the last inspection, you, your governors and your senior leaders have resolutely focused on continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning during a time of significant changes in teaching staff. As a result, standards are rising. New teachers are well supported, and middle leaders play an effective part in the school's development. The school population has grown substantially and there are now two classes in each year group. The process of change has been managed well, and you have established an inclusive school. This was summed up by one child who was proud to tell me: 'This is a welcoming school.' Pupils love their learning. They are polite, well behaved and respectful of one another's differences.

After the previous inspection, the school was asked to raise attainment in phonics and writing. Pupils' attainment and progress in writing are a strength of the school. Attainment in writing has been significantly higher than that of other pupils nationally for the last three years. The proportion of pupils who met the expected standards in phonics has been above the national figure for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils since 2015. Because of new approaches to the teaching of mathematics, pupils are developing skills in reasoning and problem-solving and tackling more challenging work. This is particularly strong in Years 5 and 6, but there is more to do in lower key stage 2 to move pupils on to work at a level appropriate to their ability quickly enough.

Governors are very committed to the school. They visit regularly to check for themselves what leaders tell them. As a result, they have clear insight into the school's strengths and areas for development and can hold leaders to account for continuous school improvement.

Leaders and governors are using the additional funding available to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities effectively. As a result, the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged and other pupils is rapidly closing. Vulnerable pupils receive excellent support from the school's pastoral team. As a result, relationships between families and the school are strong and attendance is improving. You are aware, however, that despite the school's best efforts, there are still too many pupils who are persistently absent.

Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the curriculum. They love the trips, Forest School, 'fun lessons', a wide range of sporting opportunities, and Max the school dog! However, opportunities are not always taken to practise their mathematical, reading or writing skills fully across different subjects.

The local authority has confidence in the leadership of the school and the accuracy of leaders' assessment. They have provided 'light touch' support since the last inspection. They recognise how well the school works with other schools locally to develop staff expertise and school-to-school support.

Safeguarding is effective.

Children feel safe and happy in school. The site is secure and entry and exit systems are secure. The pastoral care of children is a strength of the school. Pupils' value having the school counsellor to confide in.

All necessary checks on the suitability of staff, volunteers, contractors and governors are carried out and recorded appropriately.

Staff and governor training in child protection is up to date and governors have completed safer recruitment training.

There are few serious behaviour incidents. Systems for reporting concerns are understood by all staff. Well-documented accounts show close inter-agency working to protect children from harm and to improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

The overall attendance of all pupils is in line with all schools nationally. Absence is taken very seriously and always followed up to check that it is not related to safeguarding. Despite the school's best efforts, however, levels of persistent absence, although reducing over time, are still too high.

Inspection findings

- Pupils' attainment in writing has been well above average since the last inspection. Staff have good subject knowledge and can guide pupils precisely to improve their work further. As a result, progress is excellent and in the top 10% of schools nationally. There are many examples, particularly in Years 5 and 6, where pupils write at length across different subjects, such as Year 6 pupils' diary extracts linked to World War II. The approach is not as well developed in lower key stage 2. You are aware that there is more to be done across the school so that pupils maximise their skills in English and mathematics across other subjects.
- Phonics is taught well. In Years 1 and 2 children achieve well above expected results. They use their phonics knowledge well to attempt ambitious vocabulary in their writing and to confidently tackle unknown words when reading.
- Leaders have taken incisive action to address slower progress in mathematics than in reading or writing. Careful analysis has highlighted the need to improve fluency in basic calculation and in reasoning and problem-solving. Work in books shows that pupils are developing these skills rapidly and standards are rising, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Increasingly, work is challenging, and pupils move on quickly to an appropriate level as soon as they are ready to. In lower key stage 2, however, pupils spend too much time on calculations that they can already do before they move on to more complex mathematics, which slows progress.
- Pupils speak enthusiastically about the variety within the curriculum. They find their learning exciting and purposeful. As a result, behaviour in the classroom is excellent and pupils give of their best and work hard in lessons. Staff make careful and appropriate links between subjects, such as Year 4 combining ICT and mathematics to create spreadsheets. Where staff expectations are high, skills in English and mathematics are developed well and outcomes are good. Leaders are aware that in a few classes tasks are not challenging enough when subjects are linked and opportunities to apply skills in reading, writing and mathematics are missed.
- Leadership is fully distributed across the school. There is a culture of 'grow your own' leaders, and senior leaders support subject and middle leaders well in their professional development. Leaders at all levels monitor their subjects carefully to check how pupils are progressing. The school is outward looking and expertise are shared and developed as a result of working with other schools locally.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well by the pastoral care team. Bespoke programmes are delivered by skilled teaching assistants and graduate tutors to improve basic skills, confidence and self-esteem. Rates of progress of current pupils in reading, writing and mathematics are good and parents appreciate the open communication there is with the team. There are many examples of improved attendance and well-being because of the strong support that pupils receive.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is well targeted and barriers to learning are tackled on an individual basis. As a result, disadvantaged pupils

make excellent progress. They achieve better than other pupils nationally in Reception and in reading and writing tests at the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 6 the gap in achievement at expected levels between this group and their peers nationally has closed.

- Governance is strong. The governing body checks how well the school is doing by visiting regularly to check how the school is reaching the targets set in the school development plan. Governors have a good understanding of data relating to pupils' progress and attainment, so they are well placed to challenge subject and middle leaders about the progress that pupils are making across the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attainment and progress in mathematics are in line with that of English and that pupils are moved on to deeper learning as soon as they are ready in all classes
- teachers embed reading, writing and mathematics exceptionally well across the curriculum
- actions taken to improve persistent absence are effective and that persistent absence rates fall to be in line with national levels.

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

Yours sincerely

Lynda Welham
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I held several meetings with you and your assistant headteachers. I met separately with your mathematics leader. I met with members of the governing body and had a telephone call with a representative of the local authority. I observed the quality of learning with you and your assistant headteachers in all classes except Year 6, who had just returned from a residential trip. I observed behaviour in lessons and around the school, as well as meeting with a group of pupils from across the school to discuss their learning. I scrutinised attendance records and analysed pupils' progress in their books in lessons, and with your assistant headteacher, yourself and the mathematics leader.

I considered a range of evidence, including the school's latest assessment information, the school improvement plan, leaders' self-evaluation, pupils' work and

child protection procedures and policies. At the end of the day, I had conversations with parents and I took account of parents' comments through the 11 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also read the views of 24 members of staff and 98 pupils who completed the online survey.