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Mrs Sandra MacCourt
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs MacCourt

Short inspection of Aldington Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 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 December 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Over a significant period of time, you have led the school with determination and commitment to the pupils and wider school community. You are ably supported by a strong team of leaders who are equally committed to achieving the school's vision of 'nurture and challenge'.

You, leaders and governors evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development accurately. You take effective action to improve areas of the school when they require it. A strong team spirit among the staff results in actions having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. An example of this is in the recent improvements to the teaching of phonics. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. They are appreciative of the care and support that their children receive. One parent summed up the views of many when they said, 'The school actively promotes an inclusive, considerate and nurturing environment'.

This is an inclusive school where pupils of all abilities achieve well, including those that have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The school goes to great lengths to ensure that individual needs are well met and that pupils feel safe and secure at school. Strong systems are in place to ensure that pupils support each other, for example, the buddy system between Year 6 pupils and children in early years. This enables older pupils to develop their leadership skills and helps younger children to feel well cared for in school.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are a strength of the school. In lessons, pupils listen carefully to adults and each other. They are supportive of each other's learning and are keen to help their peers. At playtimes, pupils take part in a wide range of activities that enable them to develop good friendships and have fun.

At the time of the previous inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement in writing. You have successfully dealt with both of these areas for improvement. You take clear and decisive action to improve the quality of teaching through carefully planned support and training for staff. Outcomes in writing at the end of key stage 2 have improved and the progress that pupils make is strong. You rightly recognise that assessment information can be used more effectively to allow teachers to provide challenge for pupils and to enable leaders and governors to be precise in their monitoring of pupils' progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the whole school. Robust and efficient systems are in place to ensure that the right checks are carried out on people before they start work in the school. Staff are well trained and are aware of potential dangers faced by pupils. They know the steps to follow to raise any concerns they may have about pupils. The school safeguarding leads respond to concerns in an appropriate and timely manner, resulting in good links with other professional agencies.

Pupils have a strong sense of how to keep themselves and others safe. The school curriculum is carefully planned to allow pupils the opportunity to develop their understanding. This includes visits from the NSPCC and the fire service, and outdoor learning opportunities. For example, in Year 1, a pupil explained what they needed to be careful of while independently taking part in an orienteering activity in the school woods. Pupils are provided with a variety of ways of sharing any concerns that they may have and are confident in doing so. They trust adults to help resolve problems and provide support when necessary. Parents rightly trust the school to take good care of their children and appreciate the work of leaders to ensure that pupils are safe.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed to look at specific areas of the school's work including: the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements; the progress that pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and the most able, are making in mathematics in key stage 2; the progress that pupils, particularly the disadvantaged and low-attaining pupils, are making in writing; and the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing pupils for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve the quality of the teaching of mathematics and this is having a positive impact on the progress that pupils are making. Disadvantaged pupils make the same strong rates of progress as other

pupils.

- The recently improved mathematics curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to improve their mathematical skills. They enjoy the 'real-life' tasks for them to apply what they have learned: for example, Year 6 pupils were involved in an entrepreneurship project where they calculated profit and loss, and Year 4 pupils were keen to continue their learning about tessellation at lunchtime by drawing complex patterns at tables in the playground.
- Where pupils are identified as having gaps in their learning, they benefit from effective 'pre-teaching' to allow them to be successful when they are in mathematics lessons. The most able pupils have the opportunity to tackle challenging tasks. However, they often spend too long completing tasks that are too easy before moving on to more difficult activities. This prevents them from making the sufficiently strong progress necessary for them to achieve the high standards.
- Opportunities for pupils to write in meaningful contexts are evident across the curriculum and within English lessons. For example, in Year 2, pupils were eager to write the script for a weather report. Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide clear explanations in lessons. As a result, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who are low attaining, make good progress.
- The teaching of phonics has improved, and children in early years and key stage 1 use and apply their phonic skills accurately when reading and writing. These skills are having a positive impact on pupils' spelling. Teachers also ensure that pupils have meaningful opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. Children in early years chose to dress as pirates and act out scenes from a story they had been reading, which enabled them to use new vocabulary they had been learning.
- In the past, when outcomes in English dipped, leaders and governors were not quick enough in identifying why this was the case. Systems for monitoring the progress that pupils make have improved and these are now robust in helping leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning.
- The school's curriculum is carefully designed to provide pupils with meaningful learning opportunities that draw on local and global resources. The school grounds and local area are well used. The outdoor learning opportunities are a strength of the school. A lesson observed in the school woods empowered pupils to develop geography skills while also learning the skills of teamwork and staying fit and healthy. International links enabled Year 5 pupils to host children of the same age from a school in France so that they learned about each other's countries. Understanding about equality is threaded through the curriculum. Pupils demonstrate compassion and open mindedness to each other as a result. Pupils in Year 3 learn to identify their strengths, for example, and that it is okay to be good at different things. Leaders show determination to continue to develop and improve the curriculum and recognise the need to continually evaluate the impact on pupils' outcomes.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve assessment systems to enable:
 - teachers to plan work that challenges the most able pupils
 - leaders to quickly identify underachievement and take steps to address it
 - governors to have a clear understanding of the achievement of different groups of pupils.

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

James Freeston
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you, senior leaders and governors, and spoke with a representative from the local authority. With senior leaders, I visited lessons in early years and key stages 1 and 2 to observe learning and talk to pupils about their learning. I spoke informally with pupils to talk about their experience of school and I scrutinised pupils' work in their books. I analysed 62 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and spoke to a number of parents at the start of the school day. During the inspection, I examined a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, documentation relating to safeguarding and the school's assessment information.