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Miss Zoe Harris
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Harris

Short inspection of Elmwood Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 10 July 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 September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Senior leaders and governors have ensured that the school is an inclusive and welcoming place. You have successfully created an environment where all feel valued. Parents, carers and pupils are proud of the way in which you have ensured that the 'rights respecting' agenda is central to everything the school does.

You have addressed the areas identified at the time of the previous inspection. You have ensured that teachers give clear advice to pupils about how to improve their work. Teachers show children how to use language well. They encourage pupils to explain and reason in lessons. As a result, pupils, many of whom speak English as an additional language, are able to express thoughts and ideas effectively both verbally and in writing.

Governors know the school well. They visit the school often. They are highly ambitious for the school and provide effective challenge which is focused on school improvement and achieving the best outcomes for pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are in place and are fit for purpose. Records are detailed and of a high quality. Staff are effectively trained in safeguarding and know how to safeguard pupils. Leaders work very effectively with external agencies. Swift action is taken where there are concerns relating to pupils'

safety and well-being. Pupils report that they feel safe at school and parents support this view. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of issues such as road safety, 'stranger danger' and what to do if they or their friends are bullied. They felt that bullying was not an issue in school but were confident that they could report it if it did happen and knew that the adults around them would deal with it effectively.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed upon key lines of enquiry. The first was around the use of pupil premium funding. I considered how effective leaders' actions have been in identifying and addressing the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils. This was because attainment and progress for this group have not been as good as for other pupils nationally or other pupils at Elmwood Infant School since the last inspection. You have rightly prioritised the attainment and progress of these pupils in your school development plan. Leaders know this group of pupils and their families well. You have ensured that actions are in place to support pupils' learning and well-being. Together with governors, you have taken the decision to fund places in breakfast and after-school clubs for disadvantaged pupils. This has resulted in improved attendance and punctuality. This is having a positive impact on outcomes. The recent introduction of staff acting as mentors for these pupils is already having an impact in boosting pupils' confidence in their learning. Pupils know that they have a special person to talk to and look forward to sharing personal achievements with them.
- You have ensured that the progress of disadvantaged pupils is closely monitored through regular progress meetings. Leaders and teachers work together to identify the steps needed to improve learning. Other professionals such as speech therapists and educational psychologists ensure that staff are trained to deliver a range of interventions which help pupils learn effectively. Interventions and boosters are carefully monitored to make sure that they are helping pupils learn well. Targets are set to ensure that all teachers have a shared understanding of how to assist pupils' progress. Parent workshops help to ensure that pupils are given support at home. Workbooks and the school's own progress data show that differences in pupil outcomes are diminishing over time. Although gaps still exist, the work you and your team are doing is having a positive impact on outcomes.
- We then considered how effective leaders' actions have been in ensuring that the early years curriculum meets the needs of children and prepares them for the next stage in their education. This was because, since the previous inspection, children have not met national standards by the end of their time in Reception. Boys' outcomes have been significantly below those of boys nationally and girls at Elmwood Infant School. You have been very proactive in helping parents support learning at home. The development of fine motor skills has a high priority in the Nursery. Parents are given resources to take home to use with their child. This is further developed in the Reception class, where writing packs are sent home to support learning. Leaders have been active in developing the skills and knowledge of staff. They ensure that staff visit other providers to inform their own practice. Assessment systems show that adults identify next steps in learning and plan opportunities for children to develop in these areas.

- The early years curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that it is interesting and engaging. Pupils are motivated and engage well with the activities available to them. Some adults are skilled at bringing learning into children's play. They ask questions that really get children thinking and exploring. The quality of learning opportunities provided in the inside and outside classrooms is not the same. Inside the classroom there are lots of opportunities for children to develop mark-making, writing, problem solving and number skills. The environment is full of printed language and numbers, which supports language development, number recognition and writing. However, this is not the case in the outside classroom where there are fewer opportunities to develop these skills and significantly less print in the environment to support learning.
- I then considered what leaders were doing to ensure that all pupils, including higher-attaining pupils, achieve well and are prepared for the next stage of their education. I found that reading skills and phonics are taught effectively. Daily phonics sessions ensure that pupils are making good progress in reading and writing. Additional reading sessions are targeted at those pupils who struggle. These sessions ensure that they develop fluency and that outcomes are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 1. Pupils enjoy reading and they could talk enthusiastically about their favourite stories. Higher-attaining pupils are challenged by a range of books available to them in bright and inviting reading areas in class.
- Writing skills are effectively taught across the school. Pupils understand and can talk about what makes their writing better. Teachers demonstrate how to write well. Pupils are shown how to use a range of punctuation. Presentation in English books is of a good standard. Teachers provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their writing and pupils are given time to edit their work. As a result of the good guidance their teachers give them, more pupils are now starting to work at greater depth when writing in their English books. However, teachers' expectations vary across subjects. The standard of writing in English books is better than in other subjects. This is because pupils are more careful with their handwriting, spelling, punctuation, grammar and sentence structures when writing in their English books. Teachers do not insist that pupils produce writing of the standard they are capable of when writing in all subjects. The quality of writing in other subjects is often limited by the space pupils are given to write in. As a result, they do not get opportunities in other subjects to apply the skills that are well taught in English.
- A new approach to the teaching of mathematics is helping pupils to develop a more secure understanding of mathematical concepts. You have ensured that staff have a clear understanding of what mastery in mathematics looks like by the end of key stage 1. Recent improvements in the proportion of pupils working above the expected level by the end of key stage 1 supports this. Teachers use questioning well to get pupils thinking and explaining their ideas verbally. You plan to build further on these reasoning skills by encouraging older pupils to explain their mathematical thinking in writing. The good use of resources to help pupils develop visual images of number is boosting pupils' confidence and understanding. Pupils are encouraged to select the level of challenge they are comfortable working on. Work in books shows that the majority of pupils are

effectively challenged in mathematics, although some, including higher-attaining pupils, sometimes spend too long working on things they already know or can easily do.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- children in the early years have more opportunities to read, write, count and problem solve, particularly in the outdoor learning environment
- all pupils, particularly the most able, in mathematics are moved on to more challenging work quickly so that they reach their full potential
- pupils' writing in all subjects is as good as it is in English, applying the skills they have learned across the curriculum
- teachers continue to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils so that their attainment and progress are in line with those of their peers nationally.

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

Yours sincerely

Lou Anderson
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority. I scrutinised pupils' work in English, mathematics and a range of subject/topic books. I visited lessons in the early years and key stage 1. I talked to pupils about their learning both at formal and informal times throughout the day. I met with parents at the start of the school day and analysed responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I analysed staff questionnaires. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans, pupils' attendance information, documentation related to safeguarding, and the school's assessment and behaviour information.