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Ms Debbie Keigwin
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Dear Ms Keigwin

Short inspection of South Park Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 12 September 2018 with Barney Geen OI, 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 April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The great majority of pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, now make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, more pupils are now achieving standards at and above those expected for their age. Unvalidated results for 2018 show that the standards attained by Year 6 pupils were much higher than in the previous year, including disadvantaged pupils. This improvement is also evident in pupils' books.

Pupils work very hard and with very positive attitudes. They listen carefully to each other's ideas and work well together. They take considerable pride in their work, which is well presented. This is shown not only in their written work but also in the impeccable way that they work on written number problems in mathematics. Pupils told us that they appreciate how their teachers respect them for working hard as they challenge themselves to learn new skills.

This is a very happy, purposeful school. Staff, parents, pupils and governors are all highly appreciative of the school's fair and inclusive approach and hold leaders in high regard. Parents feel that their views are listened to and say that you are always willing to 'go the extra mile' for them and their children. As one parent commented, 'Everyone from the headteacher to the caretaker makes the parents feel so welcome.'

You have an accurate view of the school's main strengths and those areas that should be further developed. Rightly, improving standards of reading and mathematics is a priority and you have sought to make swift improvements. Leaders, including those with subject responsibility, have been involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Governors, too, have been able to observe the quality of teaching for themselves. As a result, everyone is clear about how the school can improve further and leaders are taking the right actions to make these improvements.

Most parents appreciate the work that the school does to keep them well informed about their children's progress. Several commented that their children love coming to the school. However, pupils' attendance overall remains below average and the school's work to tackle this was a focus for this inspection.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are complete. All checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are in place. Clear systems exist for staff to make referrals when concerns arise, and subsequent actions are followed up effectively. Leaders work very well with families and external agencies to ensure that pupils receive well-targeted support when required. Staff training, including that related to the 'Prevent' duty, is up to date. Staff have a good knowledge of potential concerns within the local area. This increases their vigilance in spotting and reporting concerns about pupils' well-being.

The school has a very friendly atmosphere and pupils appreciate this. In conversation, pupils were relaxed and happy. They told me that they feel very safe in school and that bullying is very rare. They enjoy coming to school and find the staff both helpful and respectful. As a result, pupils behave well and have positive attitudes towards the school.

Inspection findings

- We agreed three lines of enquiry for this inspection. The first of these related to pupils' achievement in mathematics. This was because there had been a decline in pupils' progress and attainment in recent years.
- The school has used its own specialist staff and links with local schools to produce some good-quality support materials to help teachers in their planning. This, together with ongoing advice and training, has helped teachers to feel confident to teach interesting and innovative mathematics lessons.
- In addition, the greater emphasis placed on cementing pupils' basic number skills is now paying dividends. Pupils' work over time in books shows rapidly increasing skill and is extremely well presented, with higher standards now being attained in both key stages 1 and 2.
- As a second line of enquiry, I looked at leaders' actions to improve pupils' reading, including their knowledge and use of phonics. This, too, was because of a fall in standards in recent years.

- Leaders have made very effective use of staff training and the skills of subject leaders to improve the teaching of reading. Teachers have appreciated and acted on advice given by the local authority, external trainers and school leaders to change and improve their teaching. For example, all teachers now make very effective use of time and well-chosen texts so that all pupils share a quality reading lesson together.
- In addition to this, the teaching of smaller groups of lower and middle attaining pupils is helping to improve their progress. Pupils were able to tell me of the types of books they enjoy reading. They appreciate the colourful book areas outside the classrooms that give them easy access to quality reading materials. They spoke avidly about why they like certain authors; they are clearly becoming discerning readers.
- The teaching of early reading skills is led well and increasingly effective. Pupils who start in the school's early years classes generally make good progress in learning phonics, often from low starting points. Extra help is given to pupils who enter the school mid-year with English as an additional language. Even so, there remain some weaknesses in teaching, including aspects of subject knowledge and classroom organisation, so that some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- For our third line of enquiry we looked at pupils' attendance. Over time, attendance has been below average, with higher rates of persistent absenteeism than normally found. This is particularly true of the pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.
- The school has deployed a range of strategies to improve attendance, including working to build relationships with parents so that everyone understands the importance of regular school attendance. Pupils are rewarded for their good attendance through assemblies and prizes. The school has also employed additional support from the local authority education welfare service, working with the school's parent support worker. Additionally, governors have not shied away from using sanctions such as fines when other efforts have failed.
- Despite these efforts, attendance declined in the summer term of 2018, with too much absence for minor illness or holidays. Poor attendance therefore remains a negative feature of school life which governors and leaders are determined to address so that pupils are not disadvantaged by the actions of their parents.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the teaching of phonics is improved so that a greater proportion of pupils attain the expected standard by the end of Year 1
- they continue to work closely with parents to raise levels of attendance for all pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim McLoughlin
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection we held several meetings with you and senior leaders. We met with three governors and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. We considered the 11 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the five written comments on the free-text facility. The deputy headteachers accompanied us on visits to classrooms. We talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the 206 responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey. We looked at pupils' books and listened to pupils' reading as they worked in lessons. We considered the 24 staff surveys that were completed to gauge their opinion about working at the school. We also evaluated a range of school documentation, including school development plans, safeguarding records and information about current pupils' achievement.