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Mrs Joanna Bray
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bray

Short inspection of Thameside Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 October 2018 with Tracy Fielding, Her Majesty's Inspector, 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 July 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 school has grown in recent years, and new classrooms and administrative facilities have been created.

Following your recent appointment as headteacher, you have given priority to helping new staff to settle quickly into the school and to ensuring that everyone shares the same high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching and learning across the school has continued to improve. Additionally, leaders have refined their work to check pupils' progress. Outcomes for pupils continue to fluctuate across the school. In 2018, for example, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 increased. By contrast, the progress pupils made by the end of key stage 2 in 2018 fell slightly. You are well aware of these inconsistencies, and you have already produced a comprehensive plan to iron out these discrepancies and to ensure that pupils make faster progress from their starting points.

Pupils' mobility remains a significant challenge at Thameside Primary School. The school's own information shows that the number of pupils joining or leaving the school at times other than the usual transition points is extremely high. Also, the number of pupils who require additional support because they have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is in the highest 20% for all schools nationally. The quality of pastoral support available to pupils and their families is high. The school employs its own social worker, providing advice and support for a

large number of families. This allows teachers to focus their efforts on academic priorities.

Pupils behave well in lessons, responding positively to their learning activities and the instructions they receive from adults. Behaviour around school is also good. Pupils are polite to each other and respectful to adults.

Parents and carers are largely supportive of the school. While only a very small proportion of parents responded to Ofsted's online survey, the majority of respondents signalled that their children are happy and feel safe at school. One parent texted, 'I am extremely happy with the school' and another wrote, 'This is an inclusive, diverse, compassionate school which makes learning interesting and fun.' Nevertheless, a small proportion of parents indicated that they would not recommend the school to another parent. The school's own surveys, conducted in July 2017 and in March 2018, returned an overwhelmingly positive response from parents and carers about the school's environment for learning.

Governors and trustees have a clear vision and a steely determination that the school will go from strength to strength. Your appointment as the new headteacher was the culmination of a lengthy recruitment process, because trustees were determined to appoint the right person for this key role. Recruiting and retaining new, well-qualified staff has often proved challenging for governors and trustees. This term, however, the school is fully staffed and many new teachers have joined the school very recently. Governors and trustees ensure that they understand the needs, strengths and priorities of the school well. Governors and trustees ask appropriately challenging questions of senior leaders. Governors receive valuable information from trustees to help them understand how well pupils are doing. Trustees have continued to demonstrate their hugely positive impact on this school, since taking it over in 2012. Much of their work has been transformative, bringing about significant improvements to provision, leadership and the school buildings. Governors and trustees fully support your vision and relentlessness to make further improvements to pupils' progress and outcomes.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's safeguarding arrangements are well organised, securely maintained on an encrypted, electronic system, and fit for purpose. Records of adults' suitability to work with children are clear and comprehensive.

The designated safeguarding leaders work with care and precision to maintain the very large number of safeguarding records. They have a rigorous system for managing the transfer of safeguarding records when pupils join or leave the school. A designated governor carries out annual monitoring activities to ensure that systems are working well. Teachers and support staff understand their roles in keeping pupils safe at school, and they know how to report any concerns. The designated safeguarding leaders liaise effectively with other agencies, ensuring that concerns are followed up quickly. When the need arises, senior staff seek advice in a timely manner from specialist child protection advisers. The pupils I spoke to

informally around the school told me that they feel safe and happy at school. Parents confirmed that pupils are well looked after and well cared for at school.

Inspection findings

- In order to ascertain whether the school remains good, I followed a number of key lines of enquiry. The first of these was about the steps leaders are taking to ensure that children in the Nursery and Reception get off to a good start. This was because the proportion of children leaving Reception having secured a good level of development has been below the national average for many years.
- In the Nursery and Reception classrooms, children have settled into school quickly, and play and learn sociably under the effective guidance of adults. Children engage confidently with their peers and with adults, and positive relationships have been quickly established.
- The early years leader carries out her duties with enthusiasm and in the very best interests of all the children in her care. She is reflective and uses evidence from her monitoring to bring about continual improvements to the setting. Teaching and learning are appropriately planned in order to meet the needs of individual children, including the extremely high proportion who join Nursery and Reception with little or no experience of speaking English.
- The trust provides effective support for early years, for example through participation in a research project designed to support leaders and practitioners to improve outcomes further. Inspection evidence shows that practitioners do not use assessment information precisely enough to help children leave Reception with the good level of development required to make a great start in Year 1.
- My next line of enquiry was about the quality of teaching across key stages 1 and 2. Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have fluctuated in recent years and many new teachers have joined the school since the previous inspection.
- Inspection shows that the overall standard of education being provided in classes is meeting pupils' needs well. In key stage 1 classes, teachers ask pertinent questions in order to deepen pupils' understanding and consolidate new knowledge. They use helpful displays of work and resources to support pupils' mathematical and linguistic development. Teachers refer to these during lessons to help pupils complete tasks successfully.
- Across key stage 2, teachers plan lessons collaboratively so that learning opportunities are consistent across each year group. Teachers manage pupils' learning and behaviour effectively so that, on most occasions, very little time is wasted. Nevertheless, in some lessons, teachers do not make the best use of assessment information when planning learning. As a result, some pupils, especially the most able, find their work too easy, while others are not ready to move on.
- My final line of enquiry was about the capacity of leaders to bring about further improvements to outcomes for pupils. Both you and the executive headteacher are very new to the school. However, you have quickly formulated a clear understanding of priorities for improvement. Your plan to develop the school

further is rigorous and supported by the evidence you have already gathered.

- The leadership capacity of governors and the trust has already been established, with a positive track record of school improvement at Thameside Primary. There have been clear advances in teaching, leadership and resources over time. These leaders provide clear direction, support and challenge for you. They are fully committed to helping you establish yourself as the new headteacher. Other senior and middle leaders, including deputy headteachers and subject leaders, have a clear understanding about their own roles and responsibilities, which have been sharpened over the last academic year. They are well positioned, with your advice and guidance, to improve their own effectiveness in raising standards across the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make faster progress from their varying starting points, in order to improve outcomes
- across the school, including in the early years, teachers use assessment information precisely to plan activities that ensure that all learners achieve well.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Thurrock. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Rudman
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors met with you and your three deputy headteachers to discuss the school's priorities for development, and the impact of actions taken since the previous inspection.

We met the leaders who have responsibility for reading, writing, mathematics, special educational needs and the early years. In addition, we met with two governors, including the chair, and we met with the chief executive officer and the chair of the Osborne Cooperative Academy Trust.

We scrutinised a variety of sources of information, including the school's self-evaluation document, plans and records for the use of additional funding, and the school's assessment information. We checked the school's safeguarding and child

protection procedures, the records of checks leaders make on the suitability of staff to work with pupils, and information relating to attendance. We undertook joint observations of learning across the school, looked at work in pupils' books and spoke with pupils about their learning during lessons.

We analysed the 33 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including the eight free-text questionnaire responses from parents. We also considered the 34 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.