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Mr Timothy Rome
Executive Headteacher
The Crescent Primary School
The Crescent
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Dear Mr Rome

Short inspection of The Crescent Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 September 2018 with Sarah Murphy-Dutton, HMI, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2012.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

The school has been through a period of turbulence since its last inspection. There has been a large turnover in teaching and leadership staff. This has had a negative impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. The school's first group of Year 6 pupils took their end of key stage 2 statutory assessments in 2018. Leaders and governors were slow to react to anticipated weak results for this cohort. They did not put in place effective actions to support pupils in a timely manner. As a result, provisional information indicates that these pupils' outcomes were poor at the end of key stage 2, particularly in writing.

You took over the day-to-day running and leadership of the school in January 2018, having previously provided leadership support and coaching. Staff appreciate your direction and clarity. They feel that the links you have established with your own school provide useful networks and mentoring for key leaders. You evaluated quickly the areas that the school needed to address, and you established a school development plan which is supported by all. You have recruited new staff, and you have retained some existing colleagues in very challenging circumstances. As a result, the school year started with a full complement of class teachers. Staff report that morale is better than it has been for some time.

Although some parents and carers expressed concerns about staff turnover and the long-term leadership of the school, many were positive about recent changes you have overseen. They are keen to work in a closer partnership with the school, particularly in finding ways to support their children's learning at home. Most parents like the new behaviour system and typically report that their children enjoy coming to school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that suitable safeguarding arrangements and recruitment procedures are in place and are fit for purpose. Leaders with specific safeguarding responsibilities maintain high-quality records and follow up on concerns promptly. Leaders and staff identify vulnerable pupils and their families quickly, and ensure that they receive well-planned support, nurture and care to prevent concerns escalating and getting worse. Together with external agencies, leaders ensure that pupils are kept safe and protected from harm. You have a robust training and induction programme, which ensures that all staff understand their duty of care. They are confident to report and follow up on concerns about a pupil's safety or well-being.

Records show that pupils receive timely and effective first-aid treatment when they need it. Pupils told inspectors, 'It's really fun at playtime' and, 'If there are disagreements, adults sort them out'. Pupils thought that bullying had been an issue in the past but report that there is less bullying now and adults take it seriously. Pupils are confident about how to keep themselves safe, for example when they go online. They have a good understanding of democracy and British values through their 'pupil parliament'.

Inspection findings

- At the beginning of the inspection, you provided an overview of the many changes that leaders have implemented. You have been the main driver for change, putting actions in place which are targeted at raising standards in teaching, learning and assessment. However, most of these actions are at the very early stages and it is not yet possible to judge their impact.
- You identified that, to bring about lasting improvement, strong internal leadership needs to be developed. We agreed that it would be helpful to look at how effective leaders are, at all levels, in ensuring that the school is well led and managed. Working with the governing body, new senior leaders have been appointed. You are working closely with them to develop their leadership skills and to ensure that they have an accurate overview of pupils' achievement, including those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Senior leaders visit classrooms regularly to check the quality of pupils' learning. They typically provide suitable feedback to teachers on strengths and areas for improvement, including things teachers can do to improve outcomes for pupils. Keen and enthusiastic middle leaders have also been identified and appointed. They appreciate the way in which their views are sought, and they value the

professional development and support that you provide to help them to carry out their new roles.

- The new leadership team has made a start on improving the curriculum. They aim to make sure that pupils have opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding in subjects such as history, geography and art, as well as in reading, writing and mathematics. In addition, you have trained teachers in the school's new approach to assessment to ensure that they can identify and plan for gaps in pupils' learning. You intend that this approach will enable leaders to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. It is too soon to judge whether the changes that leaders have made will contribute positively to the quality of pupils' learning over time.
- Leaders identified that poor behaviour was a barrier for many pupils learning as well as they could. In order to address this, leaders have introduced a values-based behaviour system. At the same time, staff have been trained in de-escalation techniques that give pupils space to reflect on their behaviour calmly, so that they can refocus on their learning. This work has contributed to a reduction in both internal and external exclusion rates, which were high in the past. Leaders and staff investigate and manage individual incidents of poor behaviour and bullying appropriately. However, leaders do not check or evaluate whether their work is leading to improvements in pupils' attitudes, well-being and behaviour over time. This prevents leaders from identifying what they could do to make further improvements.
- In classrooms, pupils are not typically disruptive of other pupils' learning. However, sometimes teaching is not planned well enough to motivate and maintain pupils' interest. When this happens, pupils go off task and lose focus on their learning
- The governing body is committed to providing leaders with more effective challenge and support than has been the case in the past. Following the appointment of a new chair, governors have reorganised roles and responsibilities, including the remit of different committees. Although at an early stage, governors are also insisting that leaders provide them with timely and reliable information so that they can hold leaders to account for pupils' outcomes.
- We then considered what leaders were doing to ensure that all pupils make strong progress over time, particularly in key stage 2. In 2018, pupils' outcomes at the end of the early years and key stage 1 were broadly similar to their peers nationally. However, this positive picture is not evident in key stage 2. Provisional assessment information for the 2018 Year 6 cohort shows that pupils' attainment and progress were below national figures in reading and mathematics, and significantly lower in writing. The school's most recent assessment information also shows noticeably poorer outcomes for boys, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils.
- In key stage 2, pupils' outcomes in writing remain variable and continue to be weaker than in reading and mathematics. This is because, over time, teaching has not ensured that pupils acquire age-expected knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Sometimes, pupils struggle to make appropriate vocabulary choices in their writing. Pupils' handwriting is also a barrier to them

producing high-quality writing. Teachers do not reinforce or set sufficiently high expectations. Pupils who find it difficult to form and join letters correctly are not routinely given the help that they need.

- You have implemented a new approach to the teaching of writing. Work in pupils' books shows early signs of improvement, particularly in how pupils plan and organise their writing. For instance, pupils in Year 4 told inspectors that they found using the school's 'story map' approach useful as it helped them to remember and order what they wanted to write about. Teaching now provides older pupils with opportunities to edit their writing to correct any errors and make it better. However, these improvements are not consistent across all classes and year groups, and at times pupils are not clear about what it is they need to improve.
- Pupils of all abilities have opportunities to develop their thinking and reasoning skills, particularly in mathematics. However, teachers do not routinely adapt tasks or resources to support those pupils who struggle or to challenge higher-attaining pupils. Teachers do not give enough consideration to what pupils already know when planning lessons. Teaching gives insufficient weight to progression in pupils' knowledge and understanding over time.
- Teachers want pupils to achieve well but their expectations are not high enough, in part because they are sometimes unclear about what they want pupils to learn. Sometimes, teachers do not make sure pupils know what they need to do to be successful in the task set. Equally, teachers do not plan enough time for pupils to complete work to a high standard, which results in pupils rushing or not thinking deeply about their learning.
- Finally, we considered the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. You explained that improving outcomes for these pupils was a key priority for the school.
- Leaders with responsibility for inclusion have reviewed the extra help in place for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They have prioritised making sure that these pupils receive well-targeted support in classrooms. However, inspectors found that the quality of the provision for pupils is variable. Some teaching ensures that pupils are motivated and access the learning alongside their peers. However, sometimes teachers do not adapt tasks or resources appropriately to take account of pupils' needs. For example, pupils are given texts that they struggle to read or understand. When this happens, pupils become demotivated and give up quickly on an activity. In some instances, pupils are over reliant on adults to support them and are reluctant to attempt or persevere with tasks independently.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- leaders at all levels take timely and well-focused actions to secure and sustain improvements in teaching and pupils' outcomes, particularly in key stage 2
- the quality of teaching and learning improves, particularly in writing, so that

pupils, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils, make the progress of which they are capable

- teachers use assessment information effectively in order to plan learning that motivates and supports pupils to acquire age-expected knowledge and understanding across the curriculum
- teachers refine tasks and resources appropriately so that the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are fully met
- leaders and governors evaluate precisely the impact of their work to improve pupils' well-being and behaviour over time.

I am copying this letter to the chair of trustees and the chief executive officer, 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

We held meetings with you, senior and middle leaders and the chair of the governing body, who is also a trustee of the academy trust. We visited classrooms to observe learning, and they looked at samples of pupils' work in English, mathematics and other curriculum subjects. Inspectors also talked to pupils in key stages 1 and 2 about their learning, both at formal and informal times throughout the day. We considered 76 responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils. Informal discussions were held with parents at the end of the school day. We took into account 51 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including written comments. We looked at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, information on pupils' attendance and documentation related to safeguarding, as well as assessment and behaviour information.