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Ms Debra Joyce
Headteacher
Timbercroft Primary School
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Dear Ms Joyce

Short inspection of Timbercroft Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 26 September 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in November 2012.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You took up the post of headteacher in 2014 and have raised expectations within the school. You are honest and open about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, leaders have clear plans in place to address areas for improvement. As headteacher, you demonstrate commitment and passion, making sure that everything you do has the pupils' best interests at heart.

In September 2016, the school joined the Maritime Academy Trust. This was a natural progression from the partnerships the school had with other local schools. Leaders at all levels have worked together to ensure a smooth transition and the partnership is proving to be successful. Governors have a secure understanding of the school's priorities and constantly seek ways to improve governance. They visit the school regularly and challenge school leaders appropriately.

The school works closely with its partner schools, with staff giving and receiving significant support and specialist advice. This has helped to move the school forward in some aspects, notably the high outcomes of pupils. By the end of Year 6, pupils of all abilities make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' attainment at key stages 1 and 2 is also above national averages. Pupils enjoy their learning and talk about it with enthusiasm. Staff are proud to work at the school. Parents and carers also speak very positively about the school and value the care and guidance the staff provide for their children.

Leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Pupils' progress and attainment in writing have improved. Pupils write creatively and confidently across the curriculum. Teachers and leaders carefully monitor pupils' progress and make sure that tasks are suited to pupils' abilities. In the early years provision, children are well prepared for Year 1. Senior leaders are currently working with new members of staff, including on the leadership team, to ensure that they settle into their roles well.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective. Pupils are safe in school. They appreciate the security of the premises and say that they are well looked after by staff. Parents agree. One pupil said, 'We can trust our teachers to help us.' They feel confident that staff will deal with any incidents straight away. Pupils like being able to note down any concerns they have and pass them to the 'Worry Monster' in each class. Pupils learn to keep themselves safe through their lessons, assemblies and visits from organisations such as the NSPCC. Older pupils also learn about staying safe in the local area through visits from the police.

Leaders have an in-depth knowledge of up-to-date safeguarding requirements. They make sure that staff know and follow school procedures. Leaders have a secure understanding of risks to their pupils in the local area, such as gangs and domestic abuse, and are vigilant about referring causes for concern to external agencies. In a few cases, more timely recordings of actions taken by leaders would improve safeguarding practice.

Inspection findings

- Progress in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 has been consistently strong. We agreed to look at leaders' actions to maintain this as our first key line of enquiry.
- Leaders and staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in mathematics. Having analysed pupils' outcomes, leaders have focused on improving pupils' reasoning skills and problem solving in lessons. Pupils rise to the challenge and want to do well. They enjoy the complex tasks they complete in mathematics lessons. As one pupil said, 'The harder it gets, the more fun it is.' Leaders have worked with staff at a local secondary school to develop a 'learning ladder' for most-able key stage 2 pupils. This helps pupils and staff to have a clear understanding of the knowledge and skills that are needed to achieve greater depth in mathematics. Additional support for pupils who are struggling with certain concepts is well planned and effective.
- Evidence from visits to lessons and pupils' work indicates that the high standards in mathematics have been maintained. Teachers plan together to ensure that the high-quality content of lessons is consistent in each class. Leaders are already working on further improving the proportion of pupils who achieve at the higher standard.

- The second key line of enquiry we agreed to consider was attendance and persistent absence. Attendance declined in 2017 to below the national average. Persistent absence more than doubled.
- Staff monitor and track attendance comprehensively. They identify patterns and trends in absence, which helps leaders to work with individual pupils and their families. Letters are sent home and parents are invited in to discuss attendance. Leaders have put in place some motivational strategies to encourage attendance, such as the '30-day attendance challenge'. Leaders have a clear understanding of the circumstances of each child with persistent absence. They have a supportive approach to working with families whose children have poor attendance. However, they recognise that they may need to take a tougher stance with some parents where strategies have not worked.
- Leaders' actions to improve attendance have had a positive impact but they know there is more work to do. Attendance last year improved slightly. Persistent absence has reduced but is still above the national average.
- Finally, we agreed to look at pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. This was to see if pupils were making strong and sustained progress across the curriculum.
- The school has a broad curriculum which leaders have developed to engage and motivate their pupils. Displays and work in books show that pupils have many opportunities to apply their writing skills across the curriculum and they produce high-quality extended pieces of writing. Pupils enjoy working towards the 'big outcomes' learning which they complete in each year group and as a whole school. For example, pupils in Year 5 recycled furniture and sold it at auction, applying a range of skills from other subject areas, such as mathematics and design and technology, as well as developing entrepreneurial skills. School visits are well planned to tie in with pupils' learning in a particular topic and pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular clubs.
- However, leaders do not always give enough consideration to what pupils are actually learning, nor time to learn in some subjects. Evidence from pupils' work and talking to pupils does not show that pupils develop a secure knowledge and understanding in subjects such as modern foreign languages, religious education and geography.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- levels of attendance continue to improve, particularly for pupils who are persistently absent
- pupils acquire a deeper knowledge and understanding in subjects such as modern foreign languages, religious education and geography to match the substantial progress in English and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Maritime Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Greenwich. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jude Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I visited all classes in key stage 2, with the exception of Year 4 who were on a school trip. I talked with pupils in lessons and looked at their work in books and on displays. I spoke with pupils in the playground and met with a group of pupils. I reviewed documentation provided by the school, including the school's self-evaluation, safeguarding information and development plans. I held meetings with school leaders, two governors, the chief executive officer and the chair of the board of trustees. I considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys including 34 responses from parents and 12 responses from staff members.