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Mr Stephen O'Brien
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Dear Mr O'Brien

Short inspection of Southwold Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 25 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 the school was judged to be good in February 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Since the last inspection, pupils' outcomes at the end of each key stage have improved rapidly and are now stronger than the national average in all subjects. The leadership team has addressed areas identified for improvement effectively. For example, the progress made by different groups of pupils is now consistently strong. You, the leadership team and a skilled and supportive governing body, have an accurate understanding of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. You have planned and implemented effective strategies that underpin the improvement in pupils' outcomes at the end of each key stage and in all subjects. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of key stage two, they make strong progress to achieve well ahead of the national averages in all subjects.

Pupils are confident, polite and articulate. Staff value the work of senior leaders, saying that you and other senior colleagues are highly supportive. They appreciate opportunities created to improve the quality of their teaching and to develop their professional careers. The benefits of belonging to the Viridis Federation are also highly valued by staff and governors alike. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey said that they would recommend the school as their children are

happy and safe and make good progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has created a culture of safety and vigilance that is embedded across the school. Pre-employment checks on adults working at the school meet statutory requirements. All staff have regular and appropriate training. Records are thorough and show that any referrals are handled in a timely manner, leading to swift support for pupils who need it.

Pupils say that they feel safe and are confident about what to do if they feel unsafe or need support, including staying safe online. Leaders ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, are fit-for-purpose and give accurate advice to staff about how to manage any child protection concerns. Leaders are aware of the need to remind staff about the most recent changes to the policy.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection, we agreed three lines of enquiry. The first focused on the action leaders have taken to ensure strong outcomes for pupils in the early years foundation stage and throughout key stage 1. This was because, historically, outcomes in this part of the school had declined and were broadly in line with national figure at the end of 2017.
- Leaders have the highest aspirations for all pupils. They have implemented a range of effective strategies such as creating more opportunities for children in the early years in order to select challenging learning tasks and to explain their learning using more ambitious and technically accurate vocabulary.
- As a result of these strategies, more children in the early years achieved a good level of development in 2018 than was typical nationally. Across key stage 1, pupils make strong progress so that by the end of Year 2, pupils achieve ahead of the national average in all subjects.
- Teachers support pupils well from an early stage to develop strong routines and relationships. As a result, children in the early years work independently and sustain their focus. Children make sensible and varied choices about the learning they engage in. They engage in mature conversations with adults and other pupils. They work well with their peers and respond increasingly confidently to the challenges teachers provide.
- Teachers use questioning skilfully. As a result, pupils throughout the school are confident when speaking about their learning. They can speak in full sentences and use a range of increasingly complex vocabulary.
- Inspectors conducted a detailed review of pupils' writing in different subjects across key stage 1. This showed that pupils write often, and at length, maintaining writing of a high quality. They apply their writing skills well in a range of subjects. Pupils are motivated and take pride in their work. As pupils move from one year to the next, their writing improves in maturity and technical accuracy.

- Leaders ensure challenge for pupils in mathematics. As a result of a redesigned curriculum, which has increased challenge, pupils now explain and justify their mathematical thinking using increasingly precise vocabulary.
- However, occasionally teachers do not check pupils' understanding fully. This leads to misconceptions and some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders have identified this through their recent analysis of teaching and learning and have plans in place to address this area.
- The second line of enquiry focused on the impact of the curriculum on pupils' outcomes. This was because you and the leadership team have identified the curriculum as a particular strength of the school.
- Leaders are passionate in ensuring that pupils are provided with a rich variety of experiences and opportunities across a comprehensive curriculum that is focused on pupils developing a range of appropriate skills and knowledge. For example, pupils learn about the lives of influential people from different fields, such as Charles Darwin and Mary Seacole. As a result, pupils use increasingly complex vocabulary precisely and are motivated about learning about different times, places and people.
- The curriculum develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of healthy lifestyles. Teachers enable pupils to learn about the environment and develop cultural awareness through participation in local and national events, as well as providing the opportunity to learn to play a large range of musical instruments.
- Leaders accurately identify pupils as being highly motivated, focused and equally confident when working independently or collaboratively. Visits to classrooms demonstrated that pupils show a consistently mature attitude to learning.
- School assessment information demonstrates the curriculum is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes throughout the school.
- Leaders monitor the curriculum well. Through this monitoring and evaluation, leaders acknowledge that the revised assessment system for subjects other than English and Mathematics needs to embed further so that greater emphasis is placed on pupils' successful application of subject-specific knowledge and skills.
- The final line of enquiry focused on pupils' behaviour and the actions that leaders have taken to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.
- In lessons and around the school site, pupils behave well and are polite and courteous. Staff ensure that the atmosphere is calm and highly conducive to learning. Pupils understand the behaviour system well and feel that they behave well because of it. Pupils take responsibility for significant aspects of school life, and they say that this has resulted in better behaviour across the school.
- The school works very effectively with a range of outside agencies and families to manage behaviour well. This has resulted in the number of fixed-term exclusions falling year-on-year and has now fallen sharply to be broadly in line with the national average.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers further improve their skills at using information about pupils' skills and knowledge to ensure that misconceptions are acted on swiftly
- the recently introduced approach to assessment is further embedded to support teachers in making accurate judgements in subjects beyond English and mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Turvey
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspection began with a discussion of your self-evaluation and we agreed the key lines of enquiry. Together we visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. I spoke with pupils about their learning and how the school helps to keep them safe. Meetings were held with those responsible for leading the curriculum, safeguarding and behaviour. I met a group of governors and a representative of the local authority. I reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, development plan and single central record of employment checks. I also considered responses to the staff survey, pupil survey and Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.