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David Bignell
Deanwood Primary School
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Dear Mr Bignell

Short inspection of Deanwood Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 2 November 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 September 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 have worked positively and constructively with the academy trust since the school converted to academy status in 2016 and have secured notable improvements in the school's work.

Developments in teaching have improved pupils' progress in English, mathematics and across the curriculum during the past two years. As a result, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 increased dramatically in 2018 and the quality of pupils' learning continues to improve across the school.

Substantial improvements in the teaching of reading during the past year have secured marked improvements in pupils' progress. However, you recognise that there is more to do to ensure that recent developments in the teaching of reading are fully established across the school.

Pupils regularly complete written work of a high quality in their English books. They develop a consistent, fluent handwriting style and learn how to write competently for a range of audiences. All groups of pupils, including the most able, select and use vocabulary with increasing confidence and effect in their written work. However, the quality of pupils' writing across the wider curriculum is more variable. Teachers' expectations of pupils' written work in subjects such as history and science are not as high as those in English. As a result, pupils, including the most able, do not achieve as well as they could in these subjects.

You provide high-quality training for teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers and teaching assistants complement each other's strengths well, working together effectively to support pupils' learning and well-being. High staff morale reflects your success in ensuring that staff feel valued and well supported during a period of rapid development in teaching during the past two years.

You and your leadership team monitor the impact of developments carefully. You are responsive to staff feedback about initiatives which are working well and make adjustments to teaching where needed.

You and your team have secured considerable improvements in pupils' behaviour during the past two years. Consistently clear expectations of pupils' behaviour and effective support for those pupils who need extra help to behave well make a valuable contribution to ensuring good behaviour. Pupils are keen to learn and concentrate well during lessons. They are proud of their school and speak to visitors enthusiastically about school life.

The school's attractive, welcoming and inclusive environment makes a strong contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers value pupils' views and provide regular opportunities for them to discuss thought-provoking subjects, such as justice, freedom and equality. Pupils make sensible contributions to class discussions and listen carefully to the views of others.

You have addressed each of the key issues identified when your predecessor school was most recently inspected. You have improved the quality of mathematics teaching, ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to solve mathematical problems. As a result, pupils develop a deeper and more secure mathematical understanding and make much better progress than previously.

You have strengthened links with parents and carers. You provide parents with regular information about their children's progress and give them ideas about how they can support children's learning at home. Parents are very pleased with the school's work and with their children's progress.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school's work and provide good levels of challenge for you and your team. They use a wide range of activities to secure a full picture of the school's performance. Governors are understandably pleased with improvements in the school's work during the past year. However, they are not complacent and share your ambitions for the school's future.

Safeguarding is effective.

You ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose and followed consistently. You make sure that staff recruitment checks are completed carefully and thoroughly. You respond promptly and seriously to any concerns raised about pupils' well-being and you maintain good links with agencies, such as children's services.

The school provides a well-organised and safe environment for pupils and staff. Pupils know that their teachers want the best for them and say that adults in the school look after them well. Pupils feel secure in the school as a result.

Parents are confident that their children are safe. They say that you and your teachers are easy to talk to and are interested in their views.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection I focused particularly on:
 - how well teaching equips pupils with reading skills during key stage 1 and 2
 - how effectively teaching across the curriculum extends learning for the most able pupils.
- Leaders have revised, updated and improved the teaching of reading during the past year. As a result, pupils make much better progress in reading than previously. Pupils' outcomes in reading at the end of key stage 2 increased substantially in 2018, including an increase in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard of achievement.
- Leaders ensure that reading is given appropriately high priority in the school. As one pupil commented, 'Reading is a big thing here.' Discussions about books are a regular feature of school life. For example, teachers and pupils are accustomed to talking about books they are reading during lessons, book clubs and special events. Pupils regularly choose from a wide range of high-quality books and enthuse about reading.
- Effective teaching during early years ensures that children develop an interest in books and a love of reading. Teaching during key stage 1 and 2 builds well on this positive start, so that pupils develop personal preferences for particular authors and for different types of book.
- Improvements in phonics teaching during the past year led to an increase in the results of the Year 1 phonics check in 2018. Effective phonics teaching ensures that pupils are equipped with secure reading skills by the end of Year 2.
- Teachers use questioning well during lessons to explore and develop pupils' understanding of texts. For example, during the inspection pupils in Year 4 made good use of examples from the text to illustrate and support their views about a character's appearance and personality.
- Developments in the teaching of reading during the past year have been rapid and influential in improving pupils' reading skills. However, you recognise that improvements in teaching are not yet established across the school. You are now rightly focused on making sure developments are fully embedded, so that pupils make consistently strong progress.
- Improvements in teaching since the school converted to academy status have ensured that the most able pupils achieve well. Teaching extends pupils' learning effectively so that they make good progress in English and mathematics. Leaders are now focusing on making sure that the most able pupils apply their well-developed writing skills consistently in written work completed across the

curriculum, so that they make even better progress in writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- recent improvements in the teaching of reading are fully embedded, so that pupils make rapid and sustained progress across the school
- all pupils, including the most able, complete written work of consistently high quality across the curriculum, so that they make even better progress in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I visited seven lessons with you and your deputy headteacher. I looked at pupils' work during my visits to the classrooms and spoke with pupils about their work. I also looked separately at a sample of pupils' workbooks.

I met with you and with other senior leaders. I met with three governors, including the chair of governors, and spoke with the director of education for the academy trust. I talked with pupils during the lunchtime break and spoke informally with parents at the end of the school day.

I took account of 33 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View. I also considered 16 completed staff questionnaires and 30 pupil questionnaires. I reviewed the school's website and considered a range of documents, including your summary of the school's effectiveness and the school's improvement plan. I also looked at a range of safeguarding documents and considered the outcomes of a recent school survey of parents.