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Mr Rob Earrey
Headteacher
Fitzjohn's Primary School
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Dear Mr Earrey

Short inspection of Fitzjohn's Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 4 December 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 November 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. School leaders' evaluation of the work of the school is accurate and they use this understanding to implement effective actions for improvement.

You have high levels of support from parents and carers. Virtually all the parents who completed the online survey said that the school is well led and managed and that they would recommend it to others. They value the school's work to bring the school community together and the high visibility and availability of school leaders.

School leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. They have undertaken a thorough review of the way writing is taught across the school, putting in place effective actions to ensure the consistent teaching of writing. However, while pupils are now making stronger progress in writing over time, the proportion attaining the greater depth standard is not as high as it should be. This was therefore one of my lines of enquiry for the inspection.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and make good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. They appreciate the support they receive from their teachers, saying that subjects are taught 'extremely well'. Parents feel the same and, typically, one commented that 'the school is a happy place which makes the children feel valued, confident and independent; our children hate missing a day of school'. Pupils behave well and show kindness and thoughtfulness to each other. They have complete confidence in staff to sort out any issues that arise promptly. Staff also have high expectations of pupils' conduct and most disagreements are quickly sorted out by pupils themselves.

Governors are committed to the school's success and collectively have a range of expertise and skills. Through regular visits to the school, and through reports they received from school leaders and from external agencies including the local authority, they have a detailed knowledge of the school. They use this information to monitor the impact of the work of school leaders on pupils' outcomes. This enables them to offer sharp and timely support to the leadership team.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and parents who responded to Parent View agree that their children are safe and well cared for at school. Pupils say staff encourage them to look after each other. They say that they are confident that if they have any worries or concerns, they can approach anyone in school, whether it be an adult or another child.

Leaders, including governors, have created a culture of care and vigilance and they are determined to ensure that pupils feel safe, both physically and emotionally. Record-keeping is of high quality, detailed and organised.

You continue to work very closely with other professionals to ensure that pupils, particularly those deemed as vulnerable, are supported in the best way possible. For example, access to a psychotherapist and a counsellor has had a considerable impact on pupils' academic outcomes and their mental health.

Pupils talk about the many opportunities they get within the curriculum to learn how to stay safe. They have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe at home, at school, or online. They also say that school leaders provide opportunities for their parents to learn how to support them from the dangers of the internet.

Inspection findings

- During our initial discussion, we agreed to focus on two specific aspects of the school's work. The first of these was writing. This was because, in the past, pupils' attainment in writing by the end of key stage 1 was below average, despite the good start that they made in meeting the writing early learning goal. In key stage 2, although there was some improvement in 2018, a below-average proportion of pupils reached the expected standard and the progress made by middle-attaining pupils in particular was weak.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children are supported well to develop early writing skills. Teachers in the early years provide children with lots of opportunities to write. For example, they are regularly encouraged to write labels, lists, posters and comments. This writing-rich environment allows them to practise their knowledge of phonics and apply it when writing. Consequently, children in the early years show writing skills which are at least typical of their age.
- Teachers follow this through in key stage 1. Pupils continue to develop their writing skills, taking advantage of the effective support adults provide. For example, early on in Year 1, pupils wrote a wide range of stories. Over time, they make progress in

writing to enable them to meet expected standards. However, there has been insufficient challenge to enable all of those pupils who are capable of reaching the greater depth standard by the end of Year 2 to do so.

- School leaders have put in place a wide range of actions to improve pupils' writing in key stage 2. This is paying dividends as current pupils in school are now making stronger progress in their writing. The younger pupils in key stage 2 show ambition in their writing, using new and varied vocabulary to make their writing interesting. Pupils are also experimenting with the effect that different punctuation has on the pieces they produce. They receive encouragement from adults to use their imagination and effective guidance to improve their composition. As a result, they make strong progress in their writing over time.
- Older children in key stage 2 write with growing accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation. They respond well to their teachers' high expectations. For example, they know the 'writing non-negotiables' which they are expected to apply to their writing. However, middle-attaining pupils in particular are overdependent on teachers' guidance and do not apply skills they have learned to write independently and creatively. Consequently, middle-attaining pupils in particular do not make the progress of which they are capable, and the proportion of pupils attaining the greater depth standard is not as high as it should be.
- Secondly, we considered the school's work to develop reading across the school. This was because, for at least the past three years, pupils made better progress in reading than writing.
- Pupils at Fitzjohn's show a genuine joy and love for reading. Leaders and governors support this by ensuring that pupils have access to high-quality reading materials, both in their classrooms and in their new school library. From the early years, children are supported to develop their reading skills. The teaching of phonics is highly effective and the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in the phonics screening check has been in line with, or sometimes above, the national average.
- School leaders have ensured that the teaching of reading builds on pupils' strong knowledge of phonics. Pupils' comprehension skills are well developed as they are given regular opportunities for practice and consolidation. Pupils derive genuine pleasure from reading. They talk about their books with enthusiasm. Through the effective teaching of reading, pupils across the school have developed the more sophisticated reading skills of deduction and inference. They use these skills to talk about the meaning of the books they are reading. As a result, pupils in in key stage 1 and key stage 2 make strong progress in reading over time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils in key stage 1 are stretched and challenged enough so that a higher proportion of them achieve the greater depth standard in writing
- pupils in key stage 2 are encouraged to apply the writing skills they have learned independently and creatively to enable a higher proportion of them to meet the expected, and the higher standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Edison David
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection I discussed the work of the school with you and with members of the senior leadership team. I spoke to pupils to discuss their experiences in lessons, the extent to which they feel safe and their views on learning and behaviour. I held discussions with a representative of the local authority. I considered 89 responses to the parent survey, 23 responses to the staff survey and 87 responses to the pupil survey. I met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also considered documentation provided by the school and information posted on the school's website. I looked at the single central record of staff suitability checks, and the school's analysis of pupils' attendance. Together with school leaders, I visited classes to observe learning and I looked at samples of pupils' work across all subjects. I listened to pupils read from across the ability range.