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Mrs Lisa Davis
Headteacher
Victoria Road Primary School
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Dear Mrs Davis

Short inspection of Victoria Road Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 15 January 2019, 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 September 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Collectively, senior leaders and governors have a strong aspiration for pupils to succeed. This strong shared vision, under your leadership, has provided the resilience to manage the recent changes to staffing and premises. You know the school well and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The staff enjoy working at the school and are overwhelmingly proud to be part of a constantly improving team. Leaders have the trust of most parents and carers, and the wider community, to develop the school further.

The previous inspection recognised strengths in leadership, teaching, the wider curriculum, the early years and behaviour. These strengths have been maintained. However, ensuring that the most able attain their full potential was highlighted as an aspect to be improved in the previous inspection. Staff have been given additional training in literacy and numeracy, and work together closely to ensure consistent practice in all classrooms. Staff track pupils' progress carefully. Pupils who are at risk of falling behind are identified swiftly and given support to catch up. Staff teach pupils how to improve their own work by following a series of thoughtfully planned steps. As a consequence, pupils are making better progress, and more pupils are achieving higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined than in the past.

School leaders have detailed systems for school development planning and self-

evaluation. They carefully prioritise actions to improve the school further. Although standards overall are above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics combined, you have identified the need to strengthen progress for the most able in writing. Jointly, with the governors and leadership team, you review the progress of the school development plan rigorously, to ensure that resources are used to raise standards successfully.

Leaders have organised a broad curriculum. Pupils appreciate the range of first-hand learning experiences. For example, they went to the pantomime in Canterbury when studying traditional tales and practised deciphering codes at Dover Castle when learning about the Second World War. Pupils learn about other cultures when studying the Mayan civilisation and learn about the Stone Age when creating cave paintings. As one parent commented: 'The topics they cover in school have been really engaging and I'm always impressed by the high expectations the staff have of the children's learning.'

During visits to all classrooms, we observed enthusiastic teaching with pupils being given effective support in a selection of learning activities. For example, in music lessons, Year 4 pupils practised playing a simple tune on the violin and Year 2 pupils moved musical tubes up and down in response to pitch. In an English lesson, pupils enjoyed reading a poem aloud together and answering questions about vocabulary. Staff question pupils skilfully to help them reflect on their work. Pupils discuss their learning in small groups. They learn how to work well together, acting sometimes as scribe, sometimes as speaker and at other times as listener. As a consequence of strong teaching, most pupils are making good progress.

Staff work together as a team to make sure that individual pupils and families get help when necessary. Pupils who have particular needs are encouraged and supported to take part in the school's activities. Pupils are known to staff and cared for as individuals. Pupils speak confidently and happily about their school. They are articulate, polite and respectful of one another when sharing their views. The vast majority of pupils behave well and enjoy their time at school.

Leaders encourage pupils to take part in a range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy computer club, speed-stacking cups, games club, tag rugby and dodgeball. They also appreciate having a range of activities to choose for homework, including model-making and drawing. As some pupils commented: 'We like how the teachers make things fun.' These additional activities support pupils' personal development and contribute effectively to their learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

- Leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Pupils' personal development is a priority for the school. Staff take part in regular safeguarding training and consequently recognise their responsibility to keep pupils safe. Leaders ensure that detailed and up-to-date records are kept. Staff understand what to do if they have a concern about a pupil, and know they need to take prompt action if concerned. Staff, including the family liaison officer, work

effectively with external organisations to provide support for pupils and their families. This help is appreciated by many parents.

- The majority of parents find staff to be welcoming and are confident that any concerns they raise will be addressed. There is a range of useful information for parents on the school's website, including advice about measles, how to support learning at home and links to advice about internet safety. The majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are happy that their children are cared for well and are safe at school. Some parents, however, feel strongly that their concerns are not listened to by staff and their problems are not resolved.
- Pupils take part in a range of activities organised by staff that help them learn to stay safe. Pupils know how to behave safely near roads and railways, and how to stay safe when using computers. Pupils speak articulately about scams and the importance of not sharing their personal information with strangers. Pupils are confident about talking to staff should they have concerns in or out of school, and know that these issues will be addressed. Incidents of bullying take place occasionally. However, leaders have robust procedures in place to respond effectively. Consequently, pupils are safe and say that they feel safe.

Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we agreed to focus on: the progress of most-able pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in writing; how effectively leaders maximise the potential of boys in writing; and how successfully leaders promote pupils' well-being, to ensure that the pupils are ready to learn.
- Leaders have reconsidered how writing is taught, and overall pupils now make strong progress. Staff develop pupils' skills by introducing new styles of writing in careful stages over a sequence of lessons. New resources have been purchased and there is an increasing focus on pupils improving their own writing. Pupils are given clear guidance by staff, and are able to make improvements independently. Pupils enjoy writing for a range of purposes. For example, Reception children make lists for their trip into space and key stage 2 pupils write recipes using rations available during the Second World War. Pupils are given opportunities to talk about their writing with their classmates and practise skills together. Pupils are able to use and explain a range of vocabulary with increasing confidence. Leaders track pupils' progress carefully. They use extra funding for disadvantaged pupils thoughtfully and resources are reviewed regularly. Pupils' progress in writing is improving further. Nonetheless, as we discussed, there is more to be done to ensure that more pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, attain higher standards in writing.
- Leaders are aware that some boys do not make as much progress in writing as girls. Staff plan activities deliberately to interest boys in their work. For example, in Year 5 both boys and girls enjoyed a competitive adverb game. In another class, boys in the 'space rocket' play area described their writing about space missions with enthusiasm. Boys were observed taking part in class activities, volunteering ideas for discussion and making similar progress to girls. Boys were equally keen to talk about their learning and what they enjoy at school. The

majority of boys say that they enjoy writing and the work in their books shows that they are proud of their efforts. Boys and girls who have emotional and behavioural needs are identified by staff, and along with their families are provided with effective support. Although there are some variations in standards between boys and girls, this is tracked carefully by staff. Overall, both boys and girls make similar progress.

- Leaders and governors have identified pupils' well-being as a priority to be strengthened further. There are clear systems in place for meeting pupils' personal development needs, and these high expectations are shared widely by staff. Staff manage pupils' behaviour effectively and it is monitored carefully. Pupils are happy to talk to staff and also speak positively about the 'worry monster' who helps them with their concerns. The chair of governors receives a report from the school council after each meeting and responds personally. Staff organise a range of effective strategies to support pupils' individual well-being. These include counselling, support from the family liaison officer, breakfast club, after-school care and extra-curricular activities. As a result, most pupils' well-being is supported successfully and these pupils are keen and ready to learn. Nonetheless, there is more to be done. Some parents do not feel listened to, and feel that concerns about their child's well-being are not being addressed.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are challenged consistently to attain higher standards in writing
- they work even more closely with parents, when needed, to help them support their children's well-being.

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

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Addison
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and other senior leaders, three members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority. I also met a group of pupils from Years 1 to 6. You accompanied me on visits to all classrooms, where I observed learning, spoke to pupils and looked at their work. A range of writing books were reviewed with you and senior leaders. I observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, in the playground and around the school. I took account of

32 parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 18 free-text comments. I took account of 14 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 10 responses to the pupil questionnaire. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan; information on the school's website; safety records; minutes of meetings; various policies and information about pupils' progress.