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Mrs Parv Qureshi
Headteacher
Tanners Wood Junior Mixed and Infant School
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Dear Mrs Qureshi

Short inspection of Tanners Wood Junior Mixed and Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 June 2015.

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 will be a section 5 inspection.

You took up your post in January 2016, six months after the previous inspection. Alongside the school's other leaders, its governors and staff, you have worked tirelessly to improve the school. The impact of these efforts is very clear, particularly in terms of how well pupils do during their time at Tanners Wood.

Your high expectations of pupils and your high aspirations for them are shared fully by other leaders and this permeates the school. The results of this are evident in the continually improving outcomes for pupils. The most recent published assessment information was very strong, and these high standards are reflected fully in pupils' exercise books.

The progress key stage 2 pupils made in 2018 was above average in reading and mathematics, and well above average in writing. This demonstrates marked improvements in outcomes, particularly in reading where progress was below average in 2016 and average in 2017. The proportion of pupils that reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined was some 20 percentage points above the national average. Pupils' attainment was also above

the national benchmark in reading, writing and mathematics, and in grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Outcomes in key stage 1 and in the early years are similarly strong. For example, the proportion of children that reached a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year was above the national average in 2018. The proportion that reached the expected standard in each of reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 was also above average. Almost all Year 1 pupils reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check.

The school is a lively, happy place. Pupils love their school and show excellent attitudes to learning. Parents and carers express great satisfaction with the school, and almost all respondents to Parent View said that they would recommend the school to others. Many parents chose to leave free-text comments in support of the school. Statements such as the following were typical:

'My children are very happy at this school and are making good progress across a range of areas. I feel they are well cared for both pastorally and academically. The school is very well led and the headteacher has made many positive changes in her time at the school.'

The school's leaders and governors have tackled the areas for improvement from the previous inspection well and the school is on a clear upward trajectory. Governors are ambitious for its staff and pupils. They hold you and the school's other leaders to account well. However, they recognise that they would be even more effective in this if their questioning was sharper. For example, governors check attendance in general terms, but do not ask questions about the finer detail, such as whether individual pupils' attendance has improved as a result of measures put in place, and by how much.

Leaders and governors are determined to ensure that the school's current high standards are maintained and built on. You know that there is work still to do to bring the overall rate of attendance up to the national average.

Safeguarding is effective.

The school's single central record of pre-appointment checks meets current requirements. A strong system is in place to ensure that only suitable people are allowed to work with pupils. You have ensured that current safeguarding guidance is followed well. As a result of such measures, the overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View said that their children are safe at the school.

Staff receive regular and appropriate safeguarding training. As a result, they are vigilant to possible signs of abuse and neglect. They report these concerns using the school's online system, as well as speaking to the school's safeguarding team as quickly as possible. In response to such concerns, leaders take prompt and appropriate action to protect pupils when necessary.

Inspection findings

- I followed a number of lines of enquiry to ascertain whether the school remains good. First, I looked at pupils' attendance and checked whether suitable processes are in place to promote good attendance. I chose to look at this area, because attendance has been below the national average in the past.
- You have put a range of measures in place both to promote attendance and to deal with absence. There is a balance of 'carrot and stick'. For example, an award is given to the class with the highest attendance each week and pupils are given certificates at the end of each term. Conversely, warning letters are issued when attendance is too low, and you are starting to issue fixed-penalty notices for repeated, unwarranted absence. Attendance is improving as a result of these actions and is edging towards the national average.
- Pupils' absences are followed up promptly. Where pupils are regularly absent from school, you take firm action to address this, including visiting pupils' homes, when necessary. These actions are having a very clear impact on improving individual pupils' attendance. You showed me examples of pupils' attendance improving by more than 20 percentage points because of the actions taken. No groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance.
- The second area that I looked at was the progress pupils make across the curriculum, in subjects other than English and mathematics. Published assessment information shows that pupils' outcomes in English and mathematics have improved and are now very strong. I checked that these pleasing results have not been achieved by narrowing the school's curriculum to the detriment of other subjects.
- You have focused very well on improving the quality of leadership in subjects other than English and mathematics since the previous inspection. As a result, subject leadership is now strong, and this has had a clear impact on improving the progress pupils make in these subjects. Assessment has been developed to ensure that teachers take account of what pupils know already about a subject when planning what they should learn next.
- Leaders have ensured that a wide range of subjects are taught for their own sake, not just as vehicles for pupils to practise their reading and writing skills. Teachers set clear subject-specific objectives for lessons and groups of lessons, such as, 'to understand the importance of rationing in the Second World War' in Year 6 and 'to name and locate the world's oceans' in Year 2. They plan interesting tasks for pupils and, as one pupil summed up, 'teachers make the lessons fun'. As a result, pupils develop strong knowledge and skills, and make very strong progress, across a wide range of subjects.
- The final area that I checked was the quality and impact of the school's curriculum. I found that pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. This is, at least in part, due to the rich educational diet that they are given. Many pupils chose to tell me about the subjects that they love learning about. One pupil expressed the views of many by saying, 'I like that we have so much variety.'
- Leaders have a very clear rationale for the curriculum, and you ensure that it is reviewed regularly. You are determined that the curriculum should meet the

needs of all pupils who attend the school. An example of this is the inclusion of a programme to develop pupils' self-esteem, resilience and confidence. You have found that this has made a big difference to some disadvantaged pupils, whose outcomes have improved as a result.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- attendance continues to improve so that it is at least in line with the national average
- the current high standards and strong progress in English, mathematics and across the curriculum are consolidated and built on
- governors further hone their questioning skills so that they are able to hold leaders to account even more effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other leaders, three governors and a representative of the local authority. I observed teaching and learning, jointly with you, in five classes. I spoke with pupils during my visits to classrooms and met separately with a group of pupils in key stage 2. I took into account the 111 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 110 free-text comments that were received. I also took note of 33 responses to the staff survey. I looked at pupils' work across a range of subjects. I looked at a range of school documents including the single central record of pre-appointment checks.