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Mr Michael Clark  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Clark

### **Short inspection of Roydon Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 February 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 July 2015.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Roydon is a friendly, happy school that staff enjoy working at and pupils enjoy coming to. Parents and carers are very positive about the school and how well their children are looked after. Every parent that responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that they would recommend the school to others. Some parents chose to leave a free-text message in support of the school. Comments such as, 'We are very happy with the school,' and, 'We couldn't have wished for a better school,' were typical.

You and the deputy headteacher work very closely with staff from the multi-academy trust's central team. This works very well and is helping the school to improve. For example, you were initially appointed as head of school. For the first two years, you worked under the guidance of one of the trust's executive headteachers. This enabled you to focus on teaching and learning while the executive headteacher took responsibility for some of the more managerial aspects of running a school. You became headteacher in September 2018 and now have full responsibility for the school. However, support from other headteachers in the trust, and from the trust's central team, is only ever a phone call away.

This same close relationship between the school and the central trust is also evident in terms of governance. The school has a local advisory board that meets regularly and takes responsibility for issues such as teaching and learning, the curriculum and outcomes. The trust board retains overall responsibility for all aspects of the

school's performance and monitors each area closely. The trust's chief executive officer is your line manager and meets with you regularly. All of this means that you and the deputy headteacher are both supported well and held closely to account.

You and the school's other leaders have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. For example, leaders decided to change the way that writing is taught, and the trust secured comprehensive training for staff in using the chosen method. This has had a positive impact on improving outcomes in writing.

Leaders and those responsible for governance have a very thorough and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You are fully aware of what needs to happen next for the school to improve further. Leaders are ambitious for the school, its pupils and its staff. You and the deputy headteacher have high expectations, and you lead by example. As a result, the school is improving well.

You are not complacent, and you know that there is work still to do. We looked at the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and by the most able pupils in the school and you agreed with me that their progress could be stronger and needed to be monitored more systematically and strategically.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's single central record of pre-appointment checks meets statutory requirements. The record is checked and updated regularly to ensure that nothing is missed. Strong systems are in place to ensure that only suitable people are allowed to work with pupils.

Staff receive regular training to ensure that they are kept up to date with changes to safeguarding guidance and procedures. As a result, staff recognise and report possible signs of abuse or neglect quickly. Detailed records are kept of such concerns and the actions taken in response to them. This vigilance and attention, combined with the school's open culture, helps to keep pupils safe. Every parent that responded to Parent View said that they feel that their child is safe at school.

### **Inspection findings**

- I followed a number of lines of enquiry to check whether the school remains good. First, I looked at attendance. The school's most recent overall attendance figures were above the national average. However, attendance rates for some groups, including disadvantaged pupils, were below the national average.
- School staff work particularly closely with the trust's central team in this respect. Attendance is taken very seriously and, as a result, continues to be above the national average overall. Leaders have put a wide range of measures in place both to encourage good attendance and to deter unnecessary absence. For example, a trophy is given out each week to the class with the highest attendance and good attendance is celebrated in the school's newsletter each

week. Conversely, fixed penalty notices are issued in response to parents taking their children out of school to go on holidays during term time.

- Pupils' attendance is monitored very closely, and prompt action is taken, on an individual level, where necessary. Very few pupils are persistently absent from school. Leaders work with outside agencies, such as health service colleagues and the traveller liaison officer, to improve the attendance of individuals, where appropriate. No groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance.
- The second area that I checked was the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. I chose to look at this because published assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils do not attain as well as they should.
- The school's assessment information shows that disadvantaged pupils are making similar progress to their classmates. However, in some cases, disadvantaged pupils have lower starting points. This means that although their progress is similar, their finishing points are too low. Too few disadvantaged pupils are making the strong progress needed to enable them to catch up.
- Leaders and governors have identified this as the school's key area for improvement and action is already being taken to improve it. A range of appropriate measures have been put in place to support disadvantaged pupils. You have ensured that staff are fully aware of who the disadvantaged pupils are in their classes, and that everyone understands the importance of ensuring that these pupils are given the support they need. For example, a 'barrier plan' has been written for every disadvantaged pupil, identifying their strengths, weaknesses and potential barriers to learning. Nevertheless, leaders do not focus closely enough on whether these actions are having sufficient impact on helping disadvantaged pupils to make stronger progress.
- The third area I looked at was the attainment of the most able pupils. Published assessment information shows that the most able pupils make similar progress to other pupils nationally. However, fewer of the school's most-able pupils attain the higher levels than is typical across the country. An area for improvement from the previous inspection was to ensure that the most able pupils are given more demanding work to challenge them and extend their learning.
- A range of actions have been taken since the previous inspection. For example, leaders have changed the way that mathematics is taught, so that there is now a greater focus on reasoning and solving problems. You have found that this has helped to provide greater challenge for the most able pupils. Similarly, some of the most able pupils are, at times, taught in special groups, aimed at stretching them to achieve more.
- The impact of actions to improve the progress, and thus raise the attainment, of both disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils is not checked systematically enough. This means that, although actions are taken, it is not clear whether they are having a direct effect on improving outcomes for these groups.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- develop a more systematic and strategic approach to monitoring the impact of teaching, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and the most able, so that more pupils make stronger progress, and, in turn, attainment improves further.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local advisory board, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. 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, the trust's chief executive officer and the chair of the local advisory board. I spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone. I observed teaching and learning, jointly with you, in four 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 36 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 35 free-text comments that were received. I also took note of 16 responses to the staff survey. I looked at a range of school documents, including pupils' exercise books and the single central record of pre-appointment checks.