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Alex Moir
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Dear Mr Moir

Short inspection of Park Wood Infant School

Following my visit to the school on 12 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 February 2015.

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 created a motivating, inspiring and positive environment for learning. Your leadership team and governors share your unwavering determination and ambition to provide the best possible experiences for pupils. One parent wrote: 'The headteacher leads by example and really cares about the children and wants them all to be happy and have fun! All of the teachers go the extra mile to make learning fun and they are always coming up with ways to make the children learn through interesting experiences.'

Through effective monitoring and evaluation, you and the governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and the current priorities for further improvement. You have successfully maintained and improved upon the strengths in teaching and learning reported in the last inspection, to ensure that pupils continue to achieve well. For the past three years, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2, was above the national average. Pupils are well prepared to continue their learning when they move into key stage 2. The school is a happy and highly inclusive community and you ensure that every pupil is well supported to achieve their best. 'The Hub' provides valuable and effective support for pupils with specific and additional needs.

You have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. In 2018, the proportion of pupils that attained greater depth was the same as the national average in writing, slightly below in reading and slightly above in mathematics. This was a considerable improvement in writing, which has been a focus for leaders' work. Teachers use high-quality and motivating texts very successfully, as starting points for work across the curriculum and to have a positive impact on the quality of pupils' writing. There is no complacency, however, and you rightly acknowledge that there is more to do to ensure that even more pupils achieve greater depth in their learning. A good deal of time and energy has been invested in developing the early years. Leaders have worked closely and productively with the local authority's early years team to enhance the provision, including the outdoor area. Leadership of the early years is strong and strives to further develop children's learning. Leaders check the progress of different groups and use the information to provide appropriate support.

Pupils enjoy school, behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. They develop curious, enquiring and imaginative minds. One parent commented: 'Our daughter loves coming to school and amazes us with all the new things she is learning. We love that she's had opportunities for lots of hands-on learning and experiences.' Pupils are polite, friendly, caring and kind to each other. They live up to, and promote, the school's code of Ready, Respectful, Safe. There are strong, positive relationships between pupils and teachers. As a result, pupils want to do well, persevere and are proud of their achievements. One pupil said that teachers: 'Make learning fun and help us to do things that we didn't think we could do.'

Parents are generally positive about the school. Many commented on the high level of care and support for their children. One parent wrote: 'Our son has absolutely blossomed. Since joining the school his confidence has improved massively and he has developed some lovely friendships. He is very happy, constantly engaged and thoroughly enjoys school life.' Many parents praised the teachers for being 'very friendly and always available to speak to', and said they were pleased to work with them 'as a partnership'. One parent, reflecting the views of many, said: 'My son loves school and can't wait to go in every morning.' A small minority of parents expressed the view that they would like better communication between school and home.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils' well-being and safety rightly have high priority. A parent wrote: 'The headteacher is always warm and welcoming and seems proud of the teachers and pupils. He puts safety and well-being first.' Effective checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children are firmly in place. Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. Your three designated safeguarding leaders are appropriately trained. All members of staff and governors have been trained and receive regular updates to keep on top of any new or additional requirements. There are well-established procedures to monitor and check the well-being of pupils. If any concerns arise, staff know what to do to ensure that pupils receive timely and effective action when

necessary. You involve outside agencies, where appropriate, to provide further support to pupils and their families.

Parents and staff agree that the school keeps pupils safe. One parent wrote: 'The school offers excellent pastoral care. Overall all the staff here make the school safe and welcoming to the children and I couldn't ask for anything more as I have a happy child.' Pupils say that they feel safe and well looked after in school. They said that they are confident to talk to adults in school if they have any problems and that adults will listen to them. Pupils are aware of the potential dangers when using the internet and know to tell an adult if anything makes them feel unsafe.

Inspection findings

- At the start of the inspection we agreed to focus on some key areas of the school's work. As well as inspecting safeguarding, I explored: the teaching of phonics, the achievement of children in the early years, and the provision, support and challenge for different groups of pupils.
- You have revised your approach to teaching phonics. Teachers have undertaken effective training so that phonics teaching is well planned and consistent across the classes. Pupils make good progress from their starting points. By Year 2, pupils are using their phonics skills well to help them read and write. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been broadly in line with the national average for the past two years. Almost one quarter of pupils in the current Year 1 started with complex language needs and low starting points. They are making good progress, because of good teaching and additional support, but in some cases, there has not been enough time for them to catch up fully.
- In previous years the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has been above or in line with that found nationally. In 2018, this dipped to below the national average. This was mostly due to the higher number of children who had complex needs, which was around one quarter of the cohort. In addition, almost one third were younger, summer born children.
- The space indoors has been transformed since the previous inspection and now provides a large, open learning area spanning across the three classrooms. This has enabled the early years team to plan and provide a good, stimulating range of activities and experiences across the different areas of learning. Staff are increasingly taking children's interests and ideas as the starting points for learning and helping them to explore and to develop independence and curious, enquiring minds.
- Children are happy and safe. The outdoor spaces have also been developed and provide opportunities for children to develop in all areas, including their imaginative play. The current project on space appeals to all the children and engages boys particularly well. Children were completely absorbed in taking off for the moon in their space rocket, dressed as astronauts, enthusiastically counting backwards from 10 and on a mission to discover some aliens. There is scope for further development of the outdoor spaces, especially to support

children's reading and writing development.

- Leaders keep a close check on the progress of different groups including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils. Current pupils in these groups across the school are supported well in their emotional and social development as well as their academic learning. Your own checks, and the work I looked at in pupils' books, show that, as a result, pupils in these groups make good progress from their starting points.
- Governors ensure that any additional funding received to support disadvantaged pupils or to meet the needs of pupils with SEND is used effectively. Teachers stretch the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, to achieve greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics. They question them to extend their thinking and provide challenges in their work. You are aware that there is more work to do. While all groups make good progress overall, the quality of the challenges to stretch pupils of all abilities is not always at the level of the best. A clear aim is to ensure that more pupils acquire greater depth in their knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers challenge pupils more consistently to achieve greater depth in their knowledge, skills and understanding, sharing the effective and successful strategies already established
- the early years continues to develop to further improve the provision.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and your senior leadership team. I also met with other leaders, including an assistant headteacher and the early years leader. I met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. I met with the local authority adviser. You accompanied me on visits to classes. During these visits, I spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at their work. I spoke to pupils around the school, at breakfast club, at lunchtime and in the playground, asking them for their views on the school.

I reviewed the school's website and sampled a range of documents and records,

including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness, information about pupils' achievement and documents relating to safeguarding. I considered 78 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 40 free-text comments and spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. I also considered 16 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.