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Mr Dominic Carver
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Dear Mr Carver

Short inspection of South Benfleet Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 19 March 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 November 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. Governors and staff share your aim for pupils to fulfil their potential in all respects. You have created a curriculum that supports pupils' academic and personal development very well. As a result, pupils enjoy school and strive to meet the school motto to smile, believe, persevere and succeed. They feel that learning is challenging and say teachers make learning 'interesting and fun'.

Pupils welcome opportunities to participate in the wide range of trips, clubs and sporting activities that enhance their learning and allow them to pursue their interests. For example, during the inspection, some pupils from key stage 1 and 2 were participating in a cross-country competition and others were attending a music festival.

Pupils are polite, well mannered, confident and friendly. They have a mature appreciation of equality and understand why it is important that they learn about and respect the beliefs and cultures of others. As one pupil said, 'Everyone is different but should be treated the same.'

Parents are highly supportive of the school. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the school. There were numerous comments that reflected the caring and nurturing ethos of the school, such as, 'Not only do they offer a good balanced education, but their pastoral care is also excellent.'

You know what the school does well and what you want to be even better. Governors work with you and other leaders to set priorities for improvement and check that your actions are making a difference. They provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge. Working with governors, you have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. For example, pupils confidently apply and use their skills in writing and mathematics in their geography and science work. Subject leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development in the areas for which they are responsible. They know how their improvement plans contribute to achieving whole-school priorities. Staff feel well-supported, valued and are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding is effective.

Pupils feel safe at South Benfleet Primary School and adults give the highest priority to keeping pupils safe. Pupils learn about staying safe from a variety of risks through their lessons, assemblies and visits from outside speakers. Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to stay safe when working online and gave examples of how a visiting speaker had alerted them to potential risks of taking part in 'trick or treat' during Halloween. Pupils have a thorough understanding of bullying in its different forms and of the harm that it can cause. They say that bullying does not happen often and that, in almost all cases, problems are resolved quickly. This reflects the responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and from staff.

Leaders have ensured that the school's safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You complete all the necessary checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work with pupils thoroughly. The record of these checks is accurately maintained.

Adults receive appropriate and regular training on how to keep pupils safe. You and governors ensure that you update policies and procedures to reflect the latest guidance. You have an excellent understanding of your role as designated safeguarding lead. You are ably supported by three other knowledgeable and appropriately trained leaders who can take on the role in your absence. When necessary, you make referrals to external agencies promptly, so that pupils and their families quickly receive any help that they need. When vulnerable pupils move to new schools, you ensure that all relevant information and records are transferred to the new school to reduce the risk of any pupils 'falling through the net'.

Inspection findings

- To check whether the school remains good I followed several lines of enquiry. The first was to explore how effective your actions have been to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and share the best practice in the school. This was an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are consistently effective across the school. You have made good use of a system that allows teachers to observe colleagues and share ideas. Staff appreciate the training and development opportunities that you provide. For example, training in support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has strengthened provision for these pupils.

Support from local authority English, science and mathematics advisers has contributed to improving further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. In mathematics, for example, teachers use leaders' chosen methods to ensure that pupils have a good understanding of key concepts and that pupils can use these confidently in different contexts. Subject leaders' monitoring ensures that teaching is effective and the level of challenge for pupils is appropriate. As a result, most pupils, including the most able pupils, make strong progress in most subjects across the curriculum.

- Teachers use their accurate assessments to plan activities that are well-matched to pupils' capabilities, particularly in English and mathematics. You make use of partnerships with other schools and opportunities provided by the local authority to check the accuracy of teachers' assessment in English, mathematics and the early years. The recently introduced system to assess learning and monitor pupils' progress in foundation subjects has yet to become fully established. It is too early to see its impact on supporting learning and further improving progress.
- My second line of enquiry was to explore current key stage 2 pupils' achievement in writing. This was because pupils' attainment in writing at the end of key stage 2 has increased, with the proportion of pupils attaining the standard expected in writing being above the national average in 2018. Pupils' attainment in the grammar, spelling and punctuation test was above the national average at the higher standard but the proportion of pupils attaining greater depth in writing was not as high. Also, an area for improvement in the previous inspection report was to increase opportunities for the most able pupils to practise their writing across the curriculum.
- Current pupils are making strong progress in writing. Teachers model what good writing looks like and teach the technical aspects of spelling, punctuation and grammar well. Pupils are confident to apply their phonic skills to support their spelling of unfamiliar words. Teachers use appropriately challenging texts in reading tasks, so that pupils become familiar with a wide range of vocabulary and see techniques that they can apply in their own writing.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils, including the most able pupils, to consolidate and develop their writing skills across the curriculum. Teachers have the same expectations of the quality of pupils' writing in all subjects. As a result, pupils show the same care and thought in their written work in topic books as they do in English. A very large majority of pupils produce written work that is consistently good.
- Another line of enquiry was whether leaders and governors have maintained the high quality of provision in the early years. This was because, having previously being above the national average, the proportion of children assessed as achieving a good level of development has been broadly average for the last two years.
- Children in the Reception classes make strong and sustained progress from their starting points. Adults plan activities that capture and build upon children's interest. Children are inquisitive and eager to learn. They play and learn well together. Adults use their accurate assessments to provide and adapt activities so that they meet different children's needs and capabilities. Adults ensure that

children who need extra help receive it promptly and then check that their actions are making a difference. Children develop their writing, early reading and mathematical skills well as a result.

- You have ensured that the early years leader has improved transition arrangements, both when children join the Reception classes and when they move into Year 1. Children quickly settle into the routines of the school and develop positive attitudes and behaviour that prepare them admirably for learning in key stage 1.
- My final line of enquiry was to ascertain whether you have sustained high levels of attendance for all groups of pupils. This was because attendance has been consistently higher than in most primary schools. However, attendance has been lower for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected by their high levels of attendance, overall and for most groups. You celebrate and reward high or improving attendance. Pupils know the importance of regular attendance in supporting learning. You closely monitor attendance and provide support to improve pupils' attendance when required. When attendance does not improve, you do not shy away from taking appropriate action. However, there remains a small core of pupils, including some disadvantaged pupils, whose attendance is too low.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- assessment systems in subjects other than English and mathematics become fully established and teachers use them effectively to check on pupils' progress
- they improve the attendance of those pupils, including some disadvantaged pupils, who are still absent too frequently.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I held meetings with you, senior leaders, subject leaders and four members of the governing body. I visited classrooms to observe learning and scrutinise pupils' work in all key stages. You joined me for almost all of these observations. I also heard a small group of pupils read and reviewed their reading

records.

I met with a group of pupils and spoke with others when visiting lessons to gather their views on the school. I spoke with parents before the start of the school day and took account of the 118 responses and 103 free-text comments submitted to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

I also considered the 35 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. I reviewed a range of school documentation and policies, including improvement plans, documents relating to safeguarding, assessment information and attendance records.