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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Rachel Nye
Headteacher
Tolworth Junior School
Douglas Road
Surbiton
Surrey
KT6 7SA

Dear Mrs Nye

Short inspection of Tolworth Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 20 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 July 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 and your team have created an inclusive and harmonious school community where everyone is valued and supported. Pupils from a range of backgrounds and with varying needs work together, play together and enjoy school life.

You and your leadership team have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. You have identified what you need to do to make the school even better and enlist the support of governors to hold you to account. For example, you have identified writing as priority for the school, and a governor is now linked to this area to provide appropriate support and challenge for school leaders.

Since the last inspection, you have developed and improved the school. You and your team have worked hard to embed a reading culture. You provide all pupils with opportunities to read suitably challenging texts and books. Reading is promoted and celebrated around the school. Classroom walls and doors are adorned with characters from well-known books. The focus on reading is, however, most noticeable outside, with the addition of the school's own double-decker reading bus. Pupils visit the bus regularly, and have access to a growing range of challenging reading material, including newspapers and editions of the National Geographic magazine.

Pupils are very happy in school. They particularly value the wide range of

opportunities available to them after school. They also appreciate the resources they can access during social times, such as skipping ropes and table-tennis tables. The pupils who spoke to me during the inspection were very complimentary about the support they receive with their learning. Pupils said that teachers understand some pupils need extra help, and they are quick to provide it.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, make sure that pupils are safe in school. Leaders ensure that all staff employed at the school are suitable to work with children. They maintain accurate and up-to-date safeguarding records. All staff receive high-quality safeguarding training when they join the school, and this is updated regularly.

Staff know the warning signs that may suggest a child is at risk from harm. They act swiftly, and pass information on to an appropriate member of staff, without delay. Leaders are equally quick to act when they are notified of a safeguarding concern. They access early help when necessary, and refer their concerns to relevant agencies. Occasionally, leaders are not satisfied with the response they receive from other agencies. At such times, they respond with determination to ensure that those at risk from harm receive the support and care they need.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. This is because leaders and teachers explain the potential dangers they may face, and the steps they can take to keep themselves safe. Leaders work well with the wider school community. They provide advice and support to parents and carers so that they are informed about what they can do to keep their children safe.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know who they should go to if they have a concern, and feel reassured by the high levels of staff supervision during break and lunchtimes. Every pupil who responded to the pupil questionnaire and those that spoke to me during the inspection said that they felt safe in school. Moreover, every parent or carer who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their child felt safe in school.

Inspection findings

- For the first key line of enquiry, we looked at leaders' actions to improve outcomes in writing. This is because, in 2018, pupils at the end of Year 6 made less progress in writing than in reading and mathematics.
- Leaders acknowledge that writing remains a key priority for the school. They have identified the reasons why pupils did not make strong progress last year, and have implemented a plan to improve writing.
- Leaders have prioritised writing in their staff-training programme. Teachers have introduced more challenging texts into lessons, and there are more opportunities for extended writing.
- Observations of learning and reviews of pupils' work support leaders' view that

the quality of teaching is improving. Pupils now make stronger progress in writing, over time.

- Leaders accept, however, that there is more to be done to ensure that pupils achieve their best in writing. For example, there is limited variety in the writing activities that pupils are given. Pupils are not routinely challenged to write effectively for a range of purposes and audiences. As a result, pupils are not fluent in different styles of writing and vocabulary.
- For the second key line of enquiry, we looked at how effectively leaders are improving outcomes for the most able pupils. This is because, in 2018, the most able did not achieve as well as their peers in reading, writing and mathematics, at the end of Year 6.
- Leaders recognise that the most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently in lessons, and this hinders their progress.
- Leaders are addressing this. They are implementing a plan to ensure that most-able pupils make stronger progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This plan is beginning to work.
- Staff have received training on how to meet the needs of the most able pupils. They now incorporate more challenge in lessons, and use questioning more effectively to move pupils on in their learning.
- Leaders have introduced a range of reading, writing and mathematics groups for the most able. During these sessions, pupils read and review books, and have additional opportunities to extend their mathematical knowledge and skills.
- As a result of leaders' actions, the most able now make stronger progress in reading. There is also an improving picture in mathematics. Leaders recognise, however, that there is more to be done, particularly in writing.
- For the final key line of enquiry, we agreed to look at what leaders do to improve outcomes for girls in mathematics. This is because, in 2018, girls did not achieve as well as boys, at the end of Year 6. The gap was most noticeable within the most able group, where far fewer girls achieved a higher standard than boys.
- Leaders were quick to notice that girls did not do as well as boys in mathematics last year, and they are seeking to address this.
- Leaders have identified that some girls lack confidence in mathematics. As a result, they are more likely to choose activities that they know they can do, rather than to challenge themselves.
- Leaders and teachers are working to develop girls' confidence in mathematics. Teachers consider their needs when they plan and when they ask questions. They are encouraging girls to choose more challenging tasks so that they can learn from their mistakes and grow in confidence.
- Teachers now spend more time checking that all pupils have understood and mastered mathematical skills, before moving on to new content.
- Work in books supports leaders' view that the girls in Year 6 make comparable progress to boys from similar starting points. In Years 3 and 4, however, boys' achievement remains stronger than girls', albeit this is reducing over time.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils make stronger progress in their writing by ensuring that they are given appropriate opportunities for extended writing, and to write for a range of purposes and audiences
- teachers consider pupils' prior attainment when they plan, so that the most able are suitably challenged in all lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

Niall Gallagher
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you and a range of staff, including senior and middle leaders. I also met governors and a representative from the local authority. I reviewed 85 responses to the parent questionnaire, 19 responses to the staff questionnaire and 22 responses to the pupil questionnaire. I met with a group of pupils from Years 4 and 6 to talk about their views of the school. I made visits to lessons jointly with senior leaders. I spoke with pupils about their learning, and looked at work in their books. I evaluated a range of documentation, including the school's safeguarding records and leaders' development plans.