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Mrs Tracy Good
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Good

Short inspection of Ongar Place Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 14 May 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. This is a school with a strong feeling of family and community. You know the needs of your pupils extremely well, including what may make them vulnerable, and what support pupils and their families may require. The school is highly ambitious for all pupils and staff. This is balanced extremely well within the very nurturing and caring atmosphere. You have a clear understanding of the school's strengths because your leadership team monitors the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement meticulously. As a result, teaching is effective, and pupils' attainment and progress are good.

Pupils enjoy attending school. Parents and carers confirm this, with one parent saying, 'My child is so happy at school.' Pupils told me they feel safe and listened to. They explained that bullying is rare but that occasionally pupils can display poor behaviour. However, they said that staff are quick in responding well to any incidents. Pupils said that lessons are 'interesting', with one pupil stating, 'We have fun but learn at the same time.' Another pupil added, 'This school offers a great education.'

Most parents are supportive of the school's work and would recommend the school to others. One parent said, 'Ongar is a wonderful school with dedicated teaching staff.' Parents are positive about school leaders. The parents spoken to at the end of the school day were very appreciative of the drive and commitment that staff provide for all in the school community.

Governors are very knowledgeable about the school's strengths and priorities, and are aspirational for all pupils. They understand the strategies used to overcome any barriers to pupils' achievement and bring a wide range of important skills to the governing body's work. Governors use their expertise well to hold leaders to account stringently and are developing their skills further to ensure that they continue to offer high-calibre challenge and support.

At the last inspection, you were asked to ensure that pupils confidently master basic skills in spelling, punctuation and number. Staff have worked successfully to develop pupils' understanding of spelling rules and punctuation. Adults identify pupils' errors and provide clear guidance for how they can improve. Pupils confidently use number and practise their calculation skills in a wide range of mathematical problems. You have ensured that teachers' expectations for the presentation of pupils' work, especially handwriting, are high. There is evidence that pupils are reminded by their teachers about presentation regularly and effectively.

At the previous inspection, governors were asked to improve their use of key stage 2 performance information to provide a high level of challenge to senior leaders. Inspection evidence shows that governors have a secure understanding of both the school's own achievement information and published information about pupils' performance in national tests. Governors ask senior and middle leaders a range of searching questions to check the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.

You and your staff team are aware of what the school does well and those areas that need to improve further. Senior leadership is aware that the level of challenge in some learning tasks is not matched closely enough to pupils' abilities. You also know that the quality of teachers' questioning is variable and does not ensure that pupils' skills and understanding are extended consistently.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff receive regular training. This ensures that every member of staff has the necessary knowledge and confidence to identify and report concerns. As a result, and with the effective support of governors, leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders and governors review safeguarding policies thoroughly and carry out rigorous checks of the school's single central record regularly.

As the designated lead for safeguarding, you ensure that the systems in place to safeguard pupils are effective. You make careful checks on the suitability of all adults working in school as well as those who visit. Senior leaders and two members of the governing body are trained in the safe recruitment of staff.

Pupils feel safe at school. They are taught how to keep safe in a range of situations. External speakers provide information and advice about fire risks and road safety. Pupils are well informed about possible risks when they are online.

Inspection findings

- You and your staff team have worked diligently and effectively to improve pupils' reading skills and develop a strong culture in which reading is seen as the key to learning. The systematic and well-planned approach to improving pupils' reading and comprehension skills is helping pupils to progress rapidly and achieve the higher standards. Teachers identify any gaps in pupils' understanding carefully. This ensures that learning is sequenced well and builds methodically on what pupils know. Staff explain the meaning of words precisely and, as a result, extend pupils' vocabulary and knowledge, including in other subjects. In geography, pupils know and can use accurately words such as 'landscape' and 'sedimentary'. Teachers use whole-class texts well to further improve pupils' vocabulary. For example, in Year 2, staff developed pupils' understanding of adventurous words through the whole-class reading of a poem.
- I looked at the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, especially in writing. Leaders have identified the specific barriers to disadvantaged pupils' learning. Additional staff and specialists have been employed to provide effective support and guidance, deliver one-to-one tuition and teach small nurture groups. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils achieve well in key subjects and across the curriculum. In writing, you have ensured that disadvantaged pupils have a wide range of opportunities to write for different purposes and in different genres. They make strong progress in writing and show pride in producing work of a good standard. Pupils' work shows that they use correct punctuation and accurate grammar. Some questioning by staff challenges pupils well. However, the quality of questioning varies and where it is less effective learning slows. Occasionally, the expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Pupils sometimes complete tasks that are too easy.
- In mathematics, I looked at the progress made by girls. Girls make strong gains because arithmetic is taught effectively. They are given many opportunities to practise their arithmetic skills. Work in their books shows that problem-solving activities to develop calculation skills are built into daily lessons effectively. They apply their knowledge of number operations successfully to solve complex real-life problems and investigations. Additional work is set for the most able girls to extend their knowledge and skills, and ensure that they reach the higher standards. However, there are times when the level of challenge does not stretch pupils' thinking so progress is not as strong as it could be.
- Leaders have focused successfully on improving the attendance of all pupils, including the disadvantaged. Individual attendance is checked regularly and thoroughly, and parents are informed of any concerns swiftly. You identified that some disadvantaged pupils were absent too often. Your team, including the special educational needs coordinator and emotional support assistants, has built good relationships with families. Together, and working closely with the local authority's education welfare service, you have established clear expectations for good attendance with parents and pupils. Consequently, improvements in attendance have been made. This improved attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been sustained over the last year, helping this group of pupils to achieve well.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- learning tasks are suitably challenging so all pupils make strong progress
- high-quality questioning is used consistently to deepen pupils' understanding across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, your deputy headteacher and three middle leaders. I met with the co-chairs of the governing body and two other governors. I also met with a representative of the local authority. I had a discussion with a group of pupils and spoke to others informally. I listened to pupils read during lessons. Together with you, I observed teaching in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. I spoke to parents at the end of the day and considered 44 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 29 free-text comments. I also considered 12 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

I scrutinised various documents including the school's self-evaluation and evaluations of the quality of teaching. I considered a range of safeguarding documentation, including the single central record of recruitment checks. I examined information relating to pupils' assessment and the school's development planning.