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Mr Anthony Carmel
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Carmel

Short inspection of Ashmount Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 21 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 September 2015.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

You are supported by a team of strong leaders who have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The actions you have taken to address areas for improvement are having a strong impact on pupils' outcomes. In 2017 and 2018, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2 was significantly above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils made progress similar to other pupils nationally. Similarly, in key stage 1, an above-average proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, made good progress to meet the expected standards in those subjects.

Leaders and governors have addressed effectively the areas for development identified in the previous inspection. Following the inspection, leaders commissioned an external review of governance through the local authority. Acting on the outcome of the review, governors have developed the skills to offer sharp and timely challenge to leaders. They now scrutinise in detail reports they receive from leaders, and they ensure that they regularly check the progress pupils are making across the school. Governors and leaders have deployed resources strategically to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite, courteous and confident. They behave sensibly in and out of lessons. Their behaviour contributes strongly to a highly positive

learning environment. Pupils I spoke to talked about how they support each other in lessons and during playtimes.

A very large majority of those who responded to Parent View and all the parents and carers to whom I spoke during the inspection would recommend this school. Typical of their comments was: 'This is an excellent school where provision and teaching for pupils are of the highest standard. Children are always happy to attend and rejoice in all the curricular and extra-curricular activities the school offers.'

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders follow rigorous procedures to check the suitability of staff. Records relating to safeguarding are organised, up to date and fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that staff are vigilant and aware. They have sought training on issues which affect the local community. Most recently, these included staff training on identifying and reporting incidents of child grooming, sexualised behaviour among children and avoiding gangs and knife crimes.

Leaders know their pupils and families well. They work effectively with external organisations to ensure that vulnerable families receive timely and appropriate support. Pupils feel safe at school. They benefit from a wide range of opportunities within the curriculum to keep themselves safe at school, at home and when online. They are adamant that bullying does not exist in this school. They are confident that, if it happens, teachers will address it promptly.

Inspection findings

- During our initial discussion, we identified the performance of disadvantaged pupils in reading in key stage 2 as the first line of enquiry. These pupils made progress similar to other pupils nationally in the past two years. Overall, however, their attainment was below the national average because their progress from their lower starting points was not strong enough to reach the expected standard.
- Leaders responded quickly. Their analysis identified the need for pupils to develop their comprehension skills. To address this, they have developed their own system, which includes plenty of opportunities for pupils to learn, practise and consolidate reading skills. Teachers and teaching assistants have been trained to further develop their skills in the teaching of reading. They are now better prepared to support disadvantaged pupils. Additionally, working with governors, leaders have ensured that pupils have access to high-quality reading materials.
- Across the school, pupils show genuine pleasure when reading. They use a wide range of effective strategies to decode unfamiliar words. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, I heard read during this inspection did so fluently and expressively. They show well-developed inference and deduction skills. As a result, pupils make strong progress in reading. Current assessment information shows that there is now a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading than previously.

- We also agreed to look at the school's work to produce strong outcomes for children in the early years. Children enter the early years with attainment levels below those typical for their age. In the past two years, they made such strong progress that, by the end of Reception, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was similar to the national average.
- Teachers and adults in the early years are committed to ensuring that the children achieve the best possible outcomes by the time they enter Year 1. They use assessment information effectively to plan activities in both the indoor and the outdoor learning spaces that precisely match the needs of the children.
- There is a calm, purposeful environment in the early years. Positive relationships help children to develop excellent attitudes to their learning, preparing them well for future progress through the school. Children behave well, work and play together happily and develop good social skills. They understand how to take turns and play safely.
- Leaders have rightly focused on the development of children's early reading, writing and mathematics skills. As a consequence, children show strong phonics knowledge and they are beginning to apply this in their reading and writing. Teachers receive effective support to develop a rigorous mathematics curriculum. As a result, children have a strong understanding of number. Even so, the most able children, including most-able disadvantaged children, are not stretched or challenged enough to enable them to exceed the early learning goals in writing and mathematics.
- Finally, we considered the wider curriculum. We wanted to check whether pupils achieve in other subjects as well as they do in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have designed and implemented a well-thought-out curriculum. They have carefully considered how pupils should build on their prior learning to make strong progress over time. In science, for example, pupils make strong gains in their understanding of plants. From simple understanding of how seeds develop into plants in Year 1, by the time they reach Year 5, pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of how plants reproduce. Teachers are effective at using what pupils know to help them design and carry out scientific investigations.
- Pupils also make strong progress in a range of other subjects, including history and music. Overall, the curriculum provides well for their academic, creative and physical development so that they are well prepared for secondary education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the most able children, including most-able disadvantaged children, are stretched and challenged enough to enable them to exceed the early learning goals in writing and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Islington. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Edison David
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I discussed the work of the school with you and with members of the senior leadership team. I spoke to pupils to discuss their experiences in lessons, the extent to which they feel safe and their views on learning and behaviour. I held discussions with a representative of the local authority. I considered 122 responses to Ofsted's parent survey, 16 responses to the staff survey and 81 responses to the pupil survey. I also held informal discussions with parents in the playground. I met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also considered documentation provided by the school and information posted on the school's website. I looked at the single central record of staff suitability checks and the school's analysis of pupils' attendance and behaviour. Together with school leaders, I visited classes to observe learning and looked at samples of pupils' work across all subjects. I listened to pupils read from across the ability range.